

Islam and Colonialism:
Western Perspectives on Soviet Asia

**A Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

To

The University of London (School of Oriental & African Studies)

By

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September 1999



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Abstract

Western understandings of Central Asia have reflected the political concerns of both the time and the place in which they were carried out. The thesis reviews British, French and American writing on the area in the period 1950-1985, tracing the development of the Western understanding of the role of Islam in Soviet Asian society. It is argued that this understanding has been shown by events since 1989 to have been substantially erroneous. The direction of the development of Western scholarship is explained by placing it in a political and intellectual context dominated by experiences of anti-colonial revolt and concerns about militant Islam. Other factors having an impact on research outcomes, including the backgrounds of scholars and the means by which research findings are made public are considered. It is suggested that these factors combined to create a substantive bias in the Western understanding of the region which continues to inform approaches to the area. Awareness of the potential and often unconscious sources of bias is essential if research findings are to make a claim to represent 'the real world'.

Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	p. 1
i) Aims.....	p. 1
ii) Structure.....	p. 4
iii) Texts.....	p. 8
 <u>Chapter 1: Historical Contexts</u>	p. 12
1.i) Introduction.....	p. 12
1.ii) The 1950s.....	p. 18
1.iii) The 1960s.....	p. 26
1.iv) The 1970s & 1980s.....	p. 32
1.v) Conclusion.....	p. 37
 <u>Chapter 2: Colonialism and Central Asia</u>	p. 40
2.i) Introduction.....	p. 40
2.ii) What is Colonialism?.....	p. 42
2.iii) Colonialism in Central Asia.....	p. 50
2.iii.a) Political/Economic Imperialism.....	p. 51
2.iii.b) Cultural Imperialism.....	p. 73
2.iv) The Consequences of Colonialism.....	p. 85
2.v) Conclusion.....	p. 92
 <u>Chapter 3: Anti-Colonialism in Central Asia</u>	p. 98
3.i) Introduction.....	p. 98
3.ii) The Basmachis.....	p. 98
3.iii) The Khodzhaev Trial.....	p. 103
3.iv) The War Record.....	p. 107
3.v) The Epics.....	p. 109
3.vi) Elite Nationalism.....	p. 111
3.vii) Conclusion.....	p. 122
 <u>Chapter 4: Writing on Islam - The 1950s</u>	p. 125
4.i) Introduction.....	p. 125
4.ii) Wheeler.....	p. 127
4.iii) Caroe.....	p. 129
4.iv) Monteil.....	p. 130
4.v) Hayit.....	p. 135
4.vi) Pipes.....	p. 137
4.vii) Bennigsen.....	p. 139
4.viii) Conclusion.....	p. 153

Chapter 5: Writing on Islam - The 1960s.....p.156

5.i) Introduction.....p.156

5.ii) Kolarz.....p.157

5.iii) Krader.....p.169

5.iv) d’Encausse.....p.172

5.v) Bennigsen & Lemercier-Quelquejay.....p.182

5.vi) Wheeler.....p.189

5.vii) Conclusion.....p.196

Chapter 6: Islam and Opposition - The 1970s & 1980s.....p.200

6.i) Introduction.....p.200

6.ii) Demography and Conflict.....p.201

6.iii) Central Asian Distinctiveness.....p.208

6.iv) “Official” Islam.....p.213

6.v) “Parallel” Islam.....p.221

6.vii) Soviet and non-Soviet Islam.....p.229

6.viii) Conclusion.....p.240

Conclusion - Contexts and Outcomes: Towards a Genealogy of Ideas.....p.246

i) Object.....p.248

ii) Observer.....p.251

iii) Process.....p.255

iv) Reception.....p.261

v) Closing Remarks.....p.267

Bibliography.....p.273

Notes:

Transcription:

The precise spelling of Arabic, Turkic, Persian and Russian words using the Latin alphabet has yet to be fixed. Throughout this thesis, I have used the most commonly recognised English spellings, subject to the following provisos.

i) The spellings used in original texts have been preserved where those texts have been quoted.

ii) The names of individual Soviet Central Asian Republics have been rendered in their -stan form using the most commonly accepted spelling *viz* Kazakhstan rather than Qazaqstan, Kirghizstan rather than Kirghizia or Kyrgyzstan.

iii) The terms 'Tadjik' and 'Tadjikistan' have been used throughout rather than 'Tajik' or 'Tadzhik'.

Translation:

All translations from French are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Translations from German were made with the assistance of Ms Iris Teichmann.

Translations from Russian or Central Asian languages are those of the scholars cited.

Abbreviations:

Certain journals have been referred to in notes in abbreviated form as follows

AA - Asian Affairs

CAR - Central Asia Review

CAS - Central Asia Survey

CSP - Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue Canadienne des Slavistes

PoC - Problems of Communism

RCL - Religion in Communist Lands

JIMMA - Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs

JRCAS - Journal of the Royal Central Asiatic Society

Acknowledgements:

This thesis owes its being to a number of people.

To my wife Shaoni, who put up with me for the last four years.

Also to Dr Safraz Khan, Dr Giorgos Dedes, Rev. Jean Mortimer, Mrs Jennifer Walker, Mr Phil Walker and Mr Alex Deal for their comments and encouragement.

Finally to Mr Amit De for his help in configuring the text.

Introduction

i) Aims

During the Cold War the internal dynamics of the USSR, political and social, were a matter of intense interest to Western policy makers and academics. The majority of studies in this field concentrated on Russia itself. For most in Western Europe, North America and Australasia the terms 'Russia' and 'Soviet Union' were synonyms, with 'Russia' the term most commonly used. The most important republic of the Union, Russia overshadowed the debate on both internal and international Soviet policies to the virtual exclusion of all other parts of the USSR.

Non-Russian, or non-Slavic, areas were not totally ignored. The largest of these comprised the USSR's Asian territories outside Siberia. This region, consisting of Kazakhstan and the four republics known in Soviet usage as Middle Asia (*Srednaya Aziya*),ⁱ referred to collectively in the West as Central Asia, stood out from other non-Slavic districts from a number of standpoints. In his preface to the second edition of *Central Asia: a Century of Russian Rule*, the American scholar Edward Allworth wrote

Central Asia has special significance for informed people everywhere, owing to its extraordinary human and cultural qualities... it also held and holds great importance for the foreign relations of the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, countries of the Middle East, and Southern Asia. In the short term Central Asia plays that role partly for geopolitical reasons by virtue of its very location between lands west and east, north and south.¹

In addition to its geographic location, Central Asia was significant for a number of other reasons. It was the only part of the Soviet Union with a indigenous non-European majority, which was largely racially homogenous, being mostly of Turkic origin. The Indo-European Tadjiks, who in 1989 comprised four and a half million Soviet citizens, were the region's only significant non-Turkic native group. Alongside ethno-linguistic homogeneity several other factors made Central Asia a distinct field for

ⁱ Kyrgyzstan, Tadjikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

study. The region had been militarily conquered in a relatively short period of time and relatively recently, and was the only non-European area of the USSR to have had a sophisticated urban civilization prior to absorption into the Russian sphere which could be set against that of Russia.

Because of the apparent dichotomy between Central Asia and other regions of the USSR, the social and political dynamics within the region and between Central Asia and Russia proper contained the possibility of conflict which might threaten the security of the Soviet state. Such a situation had obvious implications for Western strategists and policy makers. Throughout the Cold War some analysts in the West concentrated on examining social and political issues affecting Central Asia.

This thesis traces the development of Western thought on Central Asia as it appears in the writings of British, French and American scholars. It will be argued that from a starting point rooted in the British and French experience of empire and assumptions concerning the nature of the colonial dynamic, a consensus developed regarding a fundamental conflict of interests between Central Asians and a Soviet state conceived of in terms of the Russian nation.

As the Cold War progressed this conflict came increasingly to be cast as a civilizational one between the two incompatible absolutes of Islam and Communism leading to a widespread understanding of the Muslim religion as being the single most potent challenge to the hegemony of Marxist-Leninist ideology within the USSR.

After the events of 1991 it became apparent that the strength of Islam as an anti-colonial and anti-Russian factor in Central Asia had been over estimated. That the Central Asians did not see the necessity of conflict between being Muslim and being Soviet is illustrated by the fact that the Central Asian republics were the last to proclaim their independence from the USSR.ⁱⁱ Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev was among the first to propose renegotiating the political structure of the Union, and Kazakh independence was not proclaimed until 16th December 1991, after the creation

ⁱⁱ As opposed to "sovereignty" which proposed the primacy of Republic law over all-Union, presupposing the continued existence of a federal USSR.

of the Commonwealth of Independent States. A referendum in Uzbekistan on 17th March 1991 produced a figure of just 6% in favour of independence. By contrast, the Supreme Soviet of Latvia proclaimed that republic's independence of the USSR on 11th March of that year.²

In addition to tracing the development of Western thought concerning Central Asia during the post-War period to the point at which it was widely held that political Islam in the region posed the single greatest threat to the Soviet state, this thesis seeks to illustrate how and why such a consensus came about by examining the political and intellectual context in which such thought developed. Dallin has written of "a hard core of persistent preconceptions which tend to bias the analysis of Soviet policies and trends,"³ and Waardenburg asserted that "such books use the facts to present ideological rather than scholarly views."⁴ This thesis seeks to determine whether such a charge is justified.

The significance of this paper lies less in its analysis of the academic process than in the study of Western assumptions concerning Soviet Islam as a destabilising radical force within Central Asian society. The 'Islamic explosion' postulated by Western scholars up until the collapse of the USSR never occurred, however Western policy-makers have in the post-Soviet era continued to fear a Khomeinist-style Islamic revolution in this strategic region. This is evidenced by reactions to the Tadjik civil war of 1992-94 which was initially understood by Western newspapers and by some Western analysts as a struggle between 'militant' Islam and secular influences. Leaders of other Central Asian states, notably President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, have been quick to play the 'Islamic card' in their search for credits from international financial institutions which normally carry provisos concerning human rights, typically using the argument that domestic repression is necessary to prevent Islamic revolution. I shall argue that the concept of an 'Islamic threat' to Central Asia is in itself a largely Western construct serving Western interests, and misrepresents the significance of Islam within Central Asia today.

ii) Structure

This thesis comprises six chapters and a conclusion, each dealing with a different aspect of the development of attitudes towards Central Asian Islam. Each is sub-divided according to one of the following criteria:

A chapter may be sub-divided chronologically in order to advance the development of the terms of the debate (Chapter 1).

A chapter may be divided by the names of scholars, examining individual contributions in the field and the evolution of personal opinions about Soviet Central Asia (Chapters 4 and 5).

A chapter may be divided synoptically by topic in order further to broaden and deepen the analysis of responses to certain key issues (Chapters 2, 3, and 6).

Chapters 1 - 3 can be characterised as “contextual,” setting the parameters of the terms of the debate on Central Asia from 1950 - 1985. Chapters 4 - 6 are analytical, describing the developing debate on Soviet Islam and considering the strengths and weaknesses of particular arguments and stances. The conclusion seeks to link context with content by examining the ways in which ideas concerning Soviet Central Asia were transmitted and the effect this had on their development.

- **Chapter One** presents a summary of developments on the world stage which affected attitudes towards Central Asia. Developments from the beginning of the nineteenth century up until the Second World War are described, showing how changing concerns were reflected in the presentation of Central Asia. It is hoped to establish the principal contention that the understanding and presentation of an issue is influenced by the concerns of the time in which it is put forward and the interests of those advocating a given point of view.

The new power relations which developed after the Second World War are described. It is argued that the enhanced international status of the Soviet Union and the influence of radical nationalist/leftist ideas in the Middle East prompted a renewed interest in Central Asia. In Britain this focused on the assessment of developments in Soviet Central Asia as a means of ascertaining the attractiveness of Soviet ideology to those parts of the world over which Britain had relinquished direct control. French scholars appeared more concerned with examining whether the Soviet 'colonial' system could be adapted by France as a means of assuaging nationalist aspirations, allowing France to maintain direct control over her empire.

In the 1960s the development of the Non-Aligned Movement, the continuing Western withdrawal from Asia and Africa, the Sino-Soviet split and the Civil Rights movement in the USA influenced scholarship. Studies stressed the inability of Europeans to perpetuate their rule over non-Europeans and the undesirability of doing so. At the same time we see the development of the idea of the Soviet Union as a part of the Western, or European, world.

The 1970s and the 1980s saw the rise of the view that in the Muslim world Islamic 'fundamentalism' posed the principal challenge to European hegemony. It was during this period from the defeat of the Arab Powers in 1967 to the victory of Khomeinism in Iran that the concept of a dichotomy between European and Islamic civilisation was fully worked out, and the idea developed that Central Asians must ultimately rise in anti-colonial revolt.

• **Chapter Two** addresses the question of colonialism, why Soviet Central Asia was regarded as a colony and whether this assessment was justified.. The question of what is meant by the term 'colony' is analysed, drawing from sources of the 1950s and 1960s to establish the contemporary understanding of this concept and establishing that Soviet Central Asia was perceived as a colony of the Russian State analogous to French or British Imperial holdings. Specific examples of Russian colonialism as it appears in the literature are discussed. Finally the anticipated consequences of colonialism, seen to be demands for political as well as cultural freedom, are considered.

• **Chapter 3** considers evidence for centrifugal tendencies within Central Asia. Western scholars concentrated on four instances which appeared to argue for the existence of anti-colonial sentiment. These were the Basmachi revolt, the trial of Faizullah Khodzhaev, the experience of the Second World War and the cultural struggle over the status of traditional epic poetry.

In the relative absence of concrete examples of actual anti-colonial movements, scholars considered the attitudes towards the Russians of the local elite which might lead to such a movement. Elite nationalism was imputed, and the absence of overt hostility to the regime was explained by contending that this was a function of circumstance rather than will. Anti-Russian sentiment was said to have been subsumed into the cultural realm. The maintenance of a distinct cultural identity was regarded in the West as an act of anti-colonialism. For some scholars the clearest marker of cultural distinctiveness lay in religion.

• **Chapter 4** considers the Western understanding of Soviet Islam during the 1950s. For British scholars the question of religious belief was largely irrelevant since the term 'Muslim' did not necessarily include religious content. It was primarily in French scholarship that religious practice was addressed. This chapter focuses on the work of two French scholars, Vincent Monteil and Alexandre Bennigsen, in particular. The work of Baymirza Hayit and of Richard Pipes is also addressed. Hayit proposed that there was a fundamental clash between Islam and Communism, and that the survival of the former in Central Asia should be seen as a conscious rejection of the latter, a view endorsed by Pipes. The rejection of Communism was perceived as a rejection of Russian tutelage, and thus anti-colonialism. Monteil and Bennigsen, explicitly linking the question of religion to that of colonialism, posed the question "Are the Central Asians still Muslims?"

The chapter ends with an examination of a Soviet study of Central Asian Islam which became well known in the West and which profoundly affected perceptions of the religion in that region.

- **Chapter 5** focuses on the 1960s. It begins with an examination of the work of Walter Kolarz, who introduced the idea that the strength of Soviet Islam could not be judged from the religious establishment.

Hélène Carrère d'Encausse regarded Central Asian Islam to be in a state of decay to the level of superstition. Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay argued that this retreat from formal religious institutions strengthened the religion as a channel for maintaining a way of life distinct to that of the Russians. The preservation of Islam was a reflection of awareness of national distinctiveness and failure to associate with an over-arching Soviet identity, an understanding reinforced by Geoffrey Wheeler.

- **Chapter 6** reviews understandings of the 1970s and 1980s. It starts by examining the perceived likelihood of ethnic conflict arising from competition between different groups within the Soviet population. The potential for such conflict was seen as great, owing to a continued failure of Central Asians to identify with the regime and join Soviet culture. Aspects of Central Asian culture which maintained social distinctiveness are described. These were seen to be rooted in Islam, which was essential to national identity. The expression of Islam thereby came to be seen as an expression of nationalism.

The position of the Soviet 'ulema is assessed. They were credited with preserving the institutions of the religion, maintaining a sense of consciousness of Ummah, and promulgating a 'modernist' version of Islam which the authorities had difficulty attacking and which was not dissimilar to that propounded by the social reformers of the early years of the century, who were regarded in the West as the precursors of nationalism in the region.

The 'ulema were tainted by co-operation with the State and their numbers were inadequate to meet the religious needs of the population. For the mass of Central Asians, Islam existed as 'parallel Islam' under the direction of Sufi groups, which were

seen as being violently opposed to Russian rule. Sufis were held to propagate a traditional Islam which was susceptible to 'fundamentalist' tendencies.

Finally the relationship between Soviet and non-Soviet Muslims is discussed, considering some of the channels through which 'fundamentalism' could enter the USSR. The understanding of the nature of Central Asian Islam as an expression of social discontent was predicated on the initial understanding of Central Asia as a colony of Russia and of the dynamics of colonialism and anti-colonialism described in the earlier chapters.

The conclusion addresses some of the reasons why a particular understanding of Central Asian Islam gained currency. By looking at the way in which ideas regarding the subject were generated, were transmitted in books and journals or by direct scholarly collaboration, and were received by an audience both within the discipline and in the wider world it is hoped to show how a concept can gain a life of its own so powerful as virtually to preclude dissent.

iii) Texts

A textual study such as this must justify its choice of sources. As a 'meta-study,' that is the analysis of the research of others, it could be argued that this work falls at the hurdle it has itself established - that of a partial treatment of the evidence. I have chosen to examine, with one major exception, writings generated in Britain, France and the United States. Although not the only countries in which Central Asia was studied in the West, it was from the three countries mentioned that the majority of writing on the region emanated.

In selecting texts for examination, I began by looking at some of the more recent, from the 1980s and early 1990s. Perusing the bibliographies and notes of such works, it was possible to establish a 'canon' of earlier works cited which were obviously influential, molding the development of thought on Central Asia.

Within this canon, the work of Alexandre Bennigsen (1913 -1988) stands out as being of particular importance, and his contribution dominates this thesis. Other scholars have also been referred to as pioneers in the field. These include Carrère d'Encausse, Lemerrier-Quelquejay, Rywkin, Hostler, Kolarz, Conquest, Wheeler, Caroe, Hayit and Rakowska-Harmstone. With the exception of Hayit, whose major works were published in German and who is included because of the number of citations he receives in the work of others, all wrote in English or French and all were based in Britain, France or the USA. A number of other scholars have also been referred to where their work serves to illustrate or expand upon points made by these.

Contributors from other parts of the world have been included only where they serve to clarify a point, and where their comments were made in English-language media which were read and contributed to by the 'core group.' Whilst aware that this leaves me open to charges of 'Atlanto-centrism' in that I have not attempted fully to explore other views of Central Asia,ⁱⁱⁱ in an undertaking of this nature such a 'universalist' approach would not be feasible. In the post-Soviet era an 'Atlanticist' position continues to dominate Western strategic and policy planning on the region. An understanding of the development of this position therefore has the most immediate relevance from the Western perspective.

Even concentrating on works published in Western Europe and North America a comprehensive survey of the literature from the period would be impossible. I have restricted myself to works dealing with Soviet politics as they related to the 'colonial question' within the USSR, and within this category works intended for a wide, that is not specifically academic, audience. Most of the 'key texts' I have examined, even those appearing in journals, were aimed at a non-specialist readership.

Works which primarily concern such matters as geography, economics or Soviet military policy have largely been ignored except in so far as they serve to illustrate the debate concerning Soviet colonialism. The substantial contribution of Edward Allworth to Central Asian studies has for instance been largely excluded in so far as this

ⁱⁱⁱ Indian scholars have expressed other concerns and are often more positive towards the USSR.

focuses on literary and historical issues. I have occasionally referred to Allworth's work where it serves to illustrate particular widely-held attitudes.

It has become a cliché of Religious Studies that "Islam is more than a religion, it is a way of life." This is an attitude which informed the scholarly approach to Islam in the USSR. A thesis which limited itself to a study of the theology and ritual of Soviet Islam would be restricted in scope, since it is Islam as a "way of life" and the relationship between the Muslim and the Soviet modes of being which dominated debate on Soviet Islam. Western scholars of Soviet Islam were not by training scholars of religion but of politics and their works were aimed at a political rather than a religious audience. Because the understanding of Islam was coloured as much by attitudes towards colonialism and race relations as by purely religious considerations, a number of works concerning colonialism, ethnic identity and race relations in the USSR have been included in this survey.

My discussion of the concept of colonialism is drawn for the most part from material which appeared in the 1950s and 1960s, although to clarify certain points I have on occasion referred to certain later works. I have not attempted to generate a new theory of colonialism but describe opinions concerning colonialism at a given time in order to contextualise the development of Western thinking about Central Asia. By the same token, in discussing historical and political developments of the period I have concentrated on those events which can be seen to have impinged on attitudes towards Central Asia.

Although the focus of this thesis is on the period from the death of Stalin to the accession of Gorbachev, this has been further contextualised by an overview of developments in the field up to the 1950s and references to later concerns. These are intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

Finally, I have endeavoured to give due attention to countervailing opinions to the main thrust of analysis of the period, such as those presented by Nove and Newth, to the effect that Central Asians might be content with their position. Such views were however relatively rare, and an attempt is made to explain their unpopularity.

¹ **Allworth** (1989) p.xv

² All dates and statistics have been taken from **Bremmer & Taras** (1993). It should be noted however that precise timings and figures remain open to dispute.

³ **Dallin** (1973) p.566

⁴ **Waardenburg** (1987) p.52

Chapter 1: Historical Contexts

1.i) Introduction

Scholars do not work in a vacuum. They are subject to a variety of factors which may affect the outcome of research. Developments in quantum theory have suggested that the result of a scientific experiment may be affected by both the structure of the experiment itself and by the presence or absence of the experimenter, making 'objectivity' a chimera. If this is the case with the natural sciences it is even more so for the social sciences in which a wide array of factors may influence both the findings of research and the subject and nature of the research itself. Amongst these is the historical context in which the research takes place.

The influence of historical factors on the way in which an area is approached for study and the way in which the results of that study are presented is seen in the case of Central Asia from the beginning of the systematic study of the region in the nineteenth century.

During most of the nineteenth century Britain was the pre-eminent World power with India its most important holding. The earliest Western reports on the region were compiled by British officers of the East India Company and concerned themselves primarily with strategic considerations. This tradition of the study of Central Asia outside Russia being carried out primarily by officers of the British Indian government or by other interested British parties and supporters of British interests was continued across the century.

In the first half of the century fears of French intentions towards British India resulted in the production of such works as *The Dangers of British India from French Invasion* (1808) by an anonymous 'Late Resident at Bhagulpore' which examined the possibility of invasion via Persia and Baluchistan. Russia's annexation of North Azerbaijan in 1828 and continuing involvement in Persia alarmed both London and Calcutta and prompted Colonel George Evans to return to the threat of invasion via

Persia in his *On the Designs of Russia* (1828) and *On the Practicability of an Invasion of British India* (1829).

As Russia advanced further into Central Asia, with Tashkent falling to General Chernyaev in 1865, the focus shifted to the threat of invasion from the north. This is particularly evident in writings of the 1870s, such as Burnaby's *A Ride to Khiva*, written during the high point of Russo-British regional rivalry which has come to be known as 'The Great Game'.

In describing his visit to Central Asia, which took place in 1888, G. Dobson, a correspondent for *The Times*, remained mindful of political considerations. Knowledge of Central Asia was necessary because of its strategic value.

[The Russians] argue that their advance into Central Asia, whether by railway or otherwise, has never been dictated by any unworthier motives than those of commercial cupidity... such as those which first led England to India. This... is fairly true as far as it applies to the time before Peter the Great; but we know well enough that another and powerful [motive] has since activated Russia in planning expeditions against India, and that is the desire for revenge against English opposition in Europe, especially at Constantinople.¹

The future Viceroy of India George Curzon justified his description of Central Asia in a similar way by referring to the region's strategic significance.

A record of a journey... through a country, the interest of which to English readers consists no longer in its physical remoteness and impenetrability [as had been the case in the first half of the century], but rather in the fact that those conditions have just been superseded by a new order of things, capable at any moment of bringing it under the stern and immediate notice of Englishmen, as the theatre of imperial diplomacy; possibly - *quod di avertant omen* - as the threshold of international war.²

These works focused on the newly built Trans-Caspian Railway, Dobson's listing points of military significance such as the principle bridges, where water was available for locomotives, and the potential maximum traffic (how quickly an army could be moved along the route). Many later works such as Skrine's and Ross' *The Heart of Asia: a History of Turkistan and the Central Asian Khanates from the Earliest Time* (1899), almost half of which comprised a description of the region as seen from the line also focused on the new route.

After the Russian conquest travel in Central Asia became relatively safe and easy and a new form of literature developed. This was the description of Central Asia based on first hand observation. One of the earliest such studies was written by the Hungarian Orientalist Armenius Vámbéry, who published his findings in London. Other notable names are those of the American consul Eugene Schuyler, the British missionary and prison inspector Henry Lansdell and perhaps most remarkably the pioneering British woman anthropologist A. Meakin. The latter donned a *paranja* and travelled as a native, visiting many people's homes and leaving behind a fascinating account of Central Asian home life at the end of the nineteenth century. This body of work represents a first attempt to understand the internal dynamic of Central Asian society and remains a primary resource for understanding the Central Asia of the period.

Aside from the growth of Russian influence in Central Asia, another major development in world politics affected the way in which Central Asia was regarded. This was the intellectual revolution within Islam which led to an increased focus on the study of Central Asia for itself rather than as the staging post for Great Power politics.

Throughout much of the century the undisputed leader of Islam in British India had been Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), a figure who supported British governance on the grounds that majority rule would mean Hindu rule. Ahmad Khan advocated a form of assimilation into western ways as the best means of preserving Islam. His near contemporary Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897) took a different tack.

Al-Afghani had spent part of his youth in India before travelling to Constantinople and Egypt where he began to teach not only the traditional Islamic curriculum but "the danger of European intervention, the need for national unity to resist it, the need for a broader unity of Islamic peoples."³ This was to become the core of a movement known, in imitation of Pan-Slavism, as Pan-Islamism.

Expelled by the Khedive, al-Afghani returned to India where he was interned during the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, travelling in 1884 to Paris where with his former pupil Muhammed 'Abduh he founded the journal *al-'Urwa al-wuthqa* ('The Indissoluble Link'). In this he argued that Europe was not inherently stronger than or superior to Islam but that its success was attributable to the disunity of the Islamic community. Politically re-united and spiritually renewed, Islam could regain its former glory.

Al-Afghani's journal became one of the most influential Arabic language publications of its day, and so seriously did the British authorities take the possible appeal of its message to Indian Muslims that its import into British territory was prohibited. This is not surprising, since "for Afghani Muslim renewal and reform had but one ultimate purpose, liberation from the yoke of colonial rule."⁴ This was a serious threat to the British, who with the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885 were already beginning to lose their grip on India. The fear that an Islamicly-inspired revolt in Central Asia could spill over into India suddenly seemed real. This affected the way in which Central Asia was presented. Thus while Lansdell asserted "the people are not fanatical but rather indifferent to religion"⁵ and Vámbéry had it that "[Sufi] fraternities do not in the least bother themselves with secret political objectives,"⁶ at the end of the century Skrine and Ross warned that

Since the Russian invasion occult influence has increased, and it is not exerted in the invader's favour. Throughout Islam, indeed, the mullahs are irreconcilable enemies to Western progress, and the recent rebellion in Ferghanaⁱ has led many experts to doubt whether tenderness to indigenous institutions has not been carried too far.⁷

Skrine and Ross claimed that "a wave of sedition"⁸ was sweeping Central Asia. If such a threat could exist in Central Asia, where "the conquerors and the conquered are connected by the ties of blood, and there is a latent and unconscious sympathy between them which renders the task of government easy", how much more of a threat was there to British India where "our dominion can never strike its roots deeply into the soil. But for the bayonets on which our throne is supported it would fall..."⁹ They warned,

The forces of Islam are also equipped for a coming struggle. A Puritan movement, inaugurated by Wahabi (*sic*) missionaries eighty years ago, has spread far and wide, and the Mohammedans of India have formed secret societies.¹⁰

The end of the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth represented a high point in the Western study of Central Asia which was not to be re-attained until after the Second World War. With the outbreak of World War I and Russia's alliance with Britain the immediate threat to India was removed and Central Asia lost its primacy in British strategic thinking. After the war, changed political circumstances meant that Central Asia was low on the list of priorities as America retreated into isolationism and Europe struggled with the aftermath of the conflict, Britain in particular also becoming increasingly concerned with the internal threat against its Indian hegemony.

Central Asia again became difficult of access and such information as there was consisted primarily of memoirs of the immediately pre-Revolutionary period such as Fox's 1925 *People of the Steppe* and the recollections and political writings of émigrés, most of whom had come to be based in Istanbul.

These émigrés represented a particular type of Central Asian, being in the main part former members of or sympathisers for the *Jadidi* reformist schoolⁱⁱ imbued with a certain type of political vision which before the revolution had sought a degree of pan-Turkestani political and cultural unity in opposition to Russian dominion. Their political stance was initially not dissimilar to that of the Young Turk movement. Some, such as Mustafa Chokaev, came ultimately to fall under the spell of the Nazis.

Emigrés represented just one fraction, and a small one at that, of Central Asian political opinion. However, as the only direct source on Central Asia available in the West they were able to present their opinions as typical of Central Asians as a whole without fear of contradiction. More radical Jadids remained in Central Asia to aid a

ⁱ A reference to the Andijan revolt of 1898.

ⁱⁱ From *Usul-i Jadid*: 'New Method'. On Jadidism see e.g. Bennigsen & Lemercier-Quelquejay (1960), Pipes (1964b), d'Encausse (1966), Allworth (1989, 1990).

revolution which initially appeared to offer much of what they had been demanding, whilst much of the traditional conservative sector of society sought refuge in Afghanistan. The writings of the émigrés carried weight since in the words of Caroe writing of Zeki Validi Togan's 1929 *Bügünkü Türkili* ('Turkestan Today'),

It is rather to men of Central Asian stock, with a Russian education superimposed on their Muslim upbringing, that we must look for insight into a period of intense struggle, during which they themselves figured as founders or upholders of independent national states. These are they who not only knew the inspirations and capacities of their own peoples, but had sufficient indoctrination in revolutionary thought to aspire to give a new form to an old pattern.¹¹

Works emanating entirely from the West tended to fall into two separate camps, pro- or anti-Communist. The anti-Communist stance, illustrated by the American Emhardt's polemical 1929 *Religion in the Soviet Union* or von Mende's 1936 *Der nationale Kampf der Rußland Turken* had the upper hand according as they largely did with the views of the émigrés and with the anti-Communist mood among the ruling classes of the time who were themselves fearful of the power of the Soviet Union. Countering such anti-Communist works, those produced by the European Left such as the British Fabians Sidney and Beatrice Webb's *Soviet Communism: a new civilization* (1937) were no less adulatory than the former were condemnatory.

It can be seen that historical factors have had a profound influence on the presentation of Central Asia in the West, in the concerns of the studies (the likelihood of Russian invasion of India, the threat of Islamic revolt, the acceptability or otherwise of Bolshevik rule), who conducts the research (government officials, émigrés, polemicists) and even the nationality of the researchers, from the British near-monopoly in the West during the nineteenth centuryⁱⁱⁱ driven by concerns for India to the fragmentation to several centres after the First World War. The remainder of this chapter will examine some of the political developments affecting the way in which Central Asia was analysed in the period following the Second World War.

ⁱⁱⁱ A vast amount of information on Central Asia was generated in St. Petersburg. Much of this was translated into English at the expense of the Indian government, but such work is beyond the remit of this thesis.

1.ii) The 1950s

Even before the end of the Second World War it was obvious that the state of detente between the Soviet Union and the Western powers was to have been no more than a temporary arrangement. The Yalta conference dividing Europe into Soviet and American spheres of influence was to lay the basis for a period of confrontational international relations which was to become known as the Cold War. Relations became increasingly strained as it became clear that the USSR had a far more 'hands on' concept of 'influence' than the Western allies, with the establishment throughout Eastern and Central Europe of Communist regimes. That the quadripartite condominiums established after the war in Germany and Austria, far from providing the basis for co-operation between the USSR and the West, were potential flashpoints was shown by the Soviet blockade of Berlin in 1948 which for a time threatened renewed hostilities. The change in international relations was reflected in the way the Soviet Union was written about in the West. Whereas in 1946 the then American vice-president H. Wallace was able to write

both the Russians and the Americans, in their different ways, are groping for a way of life that will enable the common man everywhere in the world to get the most good out of modern technology. There is nothing irreconcilable about our aims and purposes...¹²

by the opening of the 1950s such a sentiment was impossible. Wallace's plea that "We must trade with Russia to prevent the world splitting into two hostile ideological camps"¹³ had already been pre-empted by the time he wrote the words.

The world at the beginning of the 1950s was very different to that of the inter-war years. The United States had been forced out of isolationism to take on a leading role in world affairs. The country's great wealth in terms of money, natural resources and manpower made it the dominant partner in the Franco-British-American alliance. Although all three countries were accorded permanent seats on the Security council of the new United Nations Organisation, Britain and France had been financially ruined by the War and began increasingly to disappear as world powers.

The Soviet Union emerged from the War with its prestige greatly enhanced. The traumas associated with the establishment and consolidation of socialism which had caused the USSR like the USA in large measure to withdraw into itself during the 1930s had been resolved and the country had no longer to be concerned primarily with internal affairs. Moscow was the only serious rival to US hegemony, a position confirmed after 1949 when Soviet nuclear testing began. Moscow had a permanent seat on the Security Council as did its ally newly Communist China, and was exporting its revolutionary ideology into Europe. Furthermore, not only was there now a 'security cordon' of compliant allies along its western flank but the USSR had itself grown with the annexation of Karelia, the Baltic States, East Prussia, Ruthenia, Bessarabia and Tuva. The USSR of the 1950s was militarily and industrially strong, internally secure and politically powerful.

Britain and France, the two major victors of the First World War, were in steep decline. Their mandates over the Middle East granted by the League of Nations had expired and Britain finally recognised that it was no longer able to control India, bringing India and Pakistan into being in 1947 and finally dismantling the Raj with the independence of Ceylon and Burma the following year. Meanwhile in 1954 the Arabs of Algeria rose in revolt against French rule, and there followed a prolonged and bloody struggle which did not end until Algerian independence in 1962.

The Algerian revolt represented a serious challenge to France. Whereas London had already accepted the inevitability of Indian self-rule, with Skrine and Ross describing the British as "sojourners" as early as 1899 and Lord Mountbatten the last Viceroy being specifically charged with ending British rule, France had formally annexed Algeria and large numbers of French migrants had made their home there. President de Gaulle made continued French control of Algeria a major part of his domestic policy.

These two events, British decolonisation and French reluctance to do likewise, affected the way Central Asia was discussed in the two countries during the 1950s. Whereas British authors tended to be concerned with the development of post-colonial societies, and particularly with the possibility of the spread of Communism to such

societies, French writers tended to focus more on examining how two contrasting civilisations, the European and the Islamic, could co-exist within a single state. Vincent Montiel suggested that in the Soviet model of relations between metropolitan Russia and the non-Russian districts of the state a blueprint could be found for the preservation of the French Empire.

Communism was seen in the West as a very real threat and during the 1950s that threat seemed primarily to be directed towards the Middle East, an area which was perceived as being of vital strategic importance and which became a major area of competition between the West and the Soviet Union as various new governments were established, in Egypt with the 1952 Free Officers' coup and the abdication of the pro-British King Faruq and earlier in Iran, where the new left-wing government of Mossadeq had shown its hostility to Western interests with the 1951 expulsion of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and nationalisation of the Iranian oil industry.

The Soviet Union had exercised a 'zone of influence' within Iran during the Second World War and immediately after the cessation of hostilities sponsored short-lived 'independent' republics in both Iranian Azerbaijan and Iraqi Kurdistan. Some recent scholars such as Malcolm Yapp have seen in this a primarily defensive intent, the establishment of a 'buffer' to protect the USSR's external boundary akin to that in Eastern Europe. At the time however Soviet involvement beyond its own frontiers was seen as hostile, as evinced by the 1948 blockade of Berlin. The response to Mossadeq was a CIA-sponsored coup which in 1953 restored the Shah.

Western support for the status quo in the region increased the prestige of the USSR in the eyes of those who were beginning to agitate for local social and political change. Thus

The Iraq Communist Party had been insignificant before 1939 but it expanded rapidly after 1941 when Soviet prestige increased and socialism became respectable. The Communist Party played a prominent role in organising the first major street disturbances in January 1948.

Disturbances continued on a regular basis throughout the 1950s, culminating in the Iraqi Free Officers' coup of 1958 which put an end to the British-sponsored Hashemite monarchy.

That the new regimes coming into power in the Middle East tended to be favourable to the Soviet Union was widely commented upon and was ascribed to a number of factors. One of these was the nationalism of the new governments which expressed itself in anti-Westernism. Communism was not seen as Western, and adopting it or something like it was not seen as compromising nationalism. One report cited Faris al-Khoury, the head of the Syrian delegation to the UN, as saying that "Soviet broadcasts in Arabic were popular among Arabs because of their desire to find in the USSR a counterweight to Western influence."¹⁴

Another factor was the perceived need to 'modernise' Middle Eastern societies. According to M. Halpern, Islam as a 'third way' between Communism and capitalism was bound to fail since its legal, political and economic structure was unsuited to the modern age. Although

A superficial and immediate reaction to our topic [the attractiveness or otherwise of Communism to Muslims] might be that obviously any spiritual, devout Muslim would reject outright the false promises of atheistic and materialistic Communism... the relation of contemporary Islam to the challenge of communism is vastly more complicated than that.¹⁵

According to Halpern conditions in the post-War Middle East were similar to those of pre-Revolutionary Russia. This was a state in which the political structure had failed to respond to social changes brought about by gradual industrialisation, where there was a pressing need for economic modernisation and where such industry as there was was controlled by foreign capitalists and bankers. Opposition to Western economic and military interests and a superficial congruity between the social teachings of Islam and Communism, a French scholar characterising both as essentially "anti-capitalist,"^{16 iv} led Halpern to the judgement that

^{iv} **Enayet** (1982) gives a concise description of Muslim approaches to the compatibility of Islam and Socialism pp.139-159.

It is becoming increasingly difficult even for a devout Muslim to avoid coming to terms with modern life. When the Muslim attempts to do so he may discover that, in the context of contemporary pressures and demands, orthodox Islam in several important respects has prepared him to yield more readily to Marxist and Stalinist propositions than to liberal democratic alternatives.¹⁷

The result of this situation was that

To many Easterners, the USSR and now possibly Communist China, represent both modernisation-in-a-hurry and revolt against Western imperialist exploitation. To secular Arab Muslims, the possibility of modernisation in a hurry may seem particularly fascinating as exemplified in the application of Stalinist methods... among the Muslims of Soviet Central Asia.¹⁸

This understanding was widespread. Monteil wrote of “the ‘dependent’ peoples, who look at - or have been shown - developments in the Soviet Union as a model, a hope... What is Communism for Muslims if not ‘the temptation of desperation’?”¹⁹ The Pakistani journalist Farid Jafri expressed the fascination thus:

Mossadeq is weak, and because of his weakness the communists are growing in importance. They go to the people and say “Look here, Islam is a social and economic movement; everybody is supposed to be equal and yet you have feudal lords and thousands and thousands of people starving. Most people have no homes, a few people have palaces; you go a few miles and you find a different picture. We in the USSR are also Muslims, but we have brought our life into tune with the Islamic concept of life; we are modern and we are happier.” People of course are impressed by that.²⁰

Lieutenant-General H. Martin, a veteran of British India and latterly military correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph* declared that

Almost everywhere throughout the Middle East conditions favour the spread of Communism... though Communism is inconsistent with the Arabs’ highest loyalty - loyalty, that is to ‘hamuleh’ or blood kin - it is not contrary to the Quran.²¹

The Canadian journalist E. Downto, who unlike most commentators had visited Soviet Central Asia, also considered the Soviet picture to be attractive to others.

I have visited the Middle East, Africa, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Afghanistan. Already the impact of the new Soviet Central Asia... is making itself very much felt in those vital peripheral areas... it is quite remarkable how many people one meets who have been taken - and I say this without disrespect - on the Red Cook’s Tour of Tashkent cotton mills and the opera house and to see the irrigation system in Tadjikistan and so on. It is significant how impressed these

people have been... Asian ears, eyes and minds and hearts are certainly far more attuned to the message from Tashkent than perhaps we are ready to admit.²²

After Stalin's death the Soviet Union became more tolerant of local variants of the Marxist message. One of these was the ideology which became known as 'Arab Socialism', a nationalist, re-distributive and anti-Western movement not dissimilar to that being propounded in India by Nehru.^v

Shortly after the Free Officers' coup in Egypt, power was seized by Gamal abd an-Nasser, who pursued a tripartite policy of Socialism (land reform), pan-Arabism and nationalism. British- and French-owned banks were nationalised, British troops were expelled in 1955 and in the following year Nasser moved to nationalise the Suez Canal (it has been suggested that Nasser's move on the Canal was in response to the withdrawal of American financial assistance in the construction of the Aswan High Dam).²³ The subsequent Israeli and Anglo-French invasion was to prove disastrous to the Western powers. Lacking US support and threatened with Soviet intervention in favour of Egypt, which had already been buying arms from the USSR and Czechoslovakia, the allies were forced to accept the UN's ruling in Egypt's favour. Only Israel gained any of its objectives - free access to the port of Eilat. British and French regional prestige was mortally damaged. One scholar has stated that the Suez Crisis was "the last occasion on which Britain and France attempted to impose their will on a major regional power by force."²⁴ From this time on Britain and France were minor players. Egypt moved further towards the USSR. Furthermore, in the eyes of many Arabs Egypt was now the leading regional power.

The Suez crisis had made Nasser an Arab hero. Before his nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company and his purchase of arms from the Soviet Bloc, Nasser had been regarded by many Arabs as a strong but colourless moderniser, but weighed in Arab scales, Suez was Stalingrad, El Alamein and the Battle of Britain rolled into one. In the Arab view Egypt had stopped Britain, France and Israel and Nasser had defied the world and won.²⁵

Suez gave credibility to Nasser's Arab Socialism throughout the Middle East, and resulted in a growth in support for parties with similar programmes, notably the Ba'ath in Syria and Iraq. Throughout the 1950s "the strongest forces were those of

^v Spear (1990) chapter 20

Nasserism, Ba'athism and Communism.”²⁶ It was not always clear what the difference between these was. This was most obviously demonstrated when the Syrian Ba'ath party, which in 1952 merged with the Arab Socialist Party and established links with Egypt and the USSR, petitioned Nasser for a union of the two states, leading to the birth of the United Arab Republic in 1958.

The position of the Soviet Union in the Middle East was further enhanced by another development, the creation of the State of Israel and the ensuing tension between it and its Arab neighbours. According to Martin “Arab-Israeli enmity and Soviet penetration are the fundamental - and interconnected - problems of the Middle East that call for solution.”²⁷

Although prior to 1948 the USSR had been favourable to the establishment of the Jewish State, once Israel had come into being Soviet policy backed the new country's Arab opponents, providing arms and technical advice in the struggle against what was widely seen in the region as the creation of Western imperialist powers. The significance of this to the field of Central Asian Studies was made clear by Geoffrey Wheeler.

The increased interest now being overtly shown by the Soviet government in the Middle East makes the study of Soviet attitudes towards Islam of particular importance...²⁸

The development of Soviet policy towards independent Muslim countries is a matter of great interest and importance, and is pregnant with possibilities. In their approach to these countries the Soviet government will no doubt draw to some extent on their experiences with the Muslim “nationalities” of Russia... it is interesting to speculate whether in the light of this experience the Soviet government will favour Arab or other Muslim federations in the middle East, or whether it will prefer to emphasise and play on cultural differences... and upon the much more marked differences in national aspirations.²⁹

As Yapp put it, “Soon the USSR was well established as the ally of radical Arab nationalism in what was depicted as a struggle against imperialism and its regional allies.”³⁰

Wheeler repeated what had been said about the attractiveness of Soviet Central Asia as a model for other Muslim states to follow, stressing that the region could serve as a tool of Soviet foreign policy increasing Soviet prestige and influence.

There is another innovation in the methods which the Soviet government is using to implement its policy towards Asian countries. This is the greatly increased use of the eastern, and largely Muslim, republics of the USSR as a shop window with which to impress the outside world with Soviet achievements in areas which have many affinities with under-developed countries in the Middle East and South Asia... in their standard of living, in general and technical education, and in industry and agriculture they are far ahead of many independent eastern countries... hardly a day goes by but what some delegation from the Arab countries, from Pakistan and from Indonesia, is present in Central Asia... and it would be foolish to suppose that the delegations are not impressed, if only because they have been told by the western propaganda that conditions in Soviet Asia are deplorable.³¹

The study of Central Asia is thus presented as necessary as a means of discovering how political and social conditions in the Middle East and elsewhere might develop under Soviet influence. This was stated specifically by the German scholar Gerhard von Mende:

Turkestan was the first country in Asia to succumb to sovietisation. It provides therefore the best example for studying the methods, effects and counter-effects of sovietisation. On the other hand it is the Turkestan region rather than the Siberian region which caused the Soviet Union to become an Asian power, from which the soviet impact on the Islamic countries and the whole of Asia has come. Turkestan is the most obvious example the Soviets have to show how they strive to turn a country into [something] positive or negative under a strict political doctrine and central economic planning.³²

The 1950s was a period in which the experience of Central Asia under Soviet rule was primarily studied in order to assess the success of Soviet policy in the region and its likely influence over the new secular, reformist and broadly left-leaning governments established in the Middle East and South Asia. Many Western studies, particularly those emanating from Britain and France, were broadly sympathetic to Soviet goals and achievements, if more condemning of Soviet methods. This is particularly so in the case of those scholars who themselves had experience of governing a non-European territory in the name of a European Power. In the following decade, this analysis was to be reversed. Rather than considering the influence of the USSR on world events,

analysts began increasingly to consider the impact of world developments on the Soviet domestic scene.

1.iii) The 1960s

The 1950s can be said to represent the birth of modern Central Asian Studies. In the 1960s this early work began to be consolidated and a consensus regarding the current situation in and likely development of Central Asia began to emerge. The preceding decade had left a body of secondary literature which could be accessed, and following the brief loosening of the Khrushchev years in the USSR a new body of primary literature frequently concerned with social issues became accessible. Part of this was made available to the non-Russian reader in the form of digests published by Geoffrey Wheeler in *Central Asia Review*, a magazine which he had edited from an address in Chelsea since 1953. The 1960s also represent the period in which for the first time American scholarship began to dominate the debate concerning Central Asia.

European withdrawal from Asia had begun gradually at the end of the 1940s. In 1957 Ghana became independent of Britain, the first sub-Saharan African state to escape European rule.^{vi} From then on the pace of decolonisation accelerated as a combination of force, persuasion and sheer exhaustion on the part of the metropolis forced the two principal Imperial powers, Britain and France, to withdraw from their overseas possessions. Force was most devastatingly employed against France, whose vision of empire, being more unitary than that of Britain, made her more reluctant to cede territory to nationalist movements. This was especially the case in Algeria and Indo-China, where a succession of crushing military defeats greatly damaged French prestige. British rule however also often faced the use of force, notably in the case of the Cypriot EOKA and the Mau-Mau of Kenya. In the long term it seemed European dominance over non-European peoples was not sustainable. The Age of Empire was giving way to a new international order of independent Asian and African nation-states

^{vi} Ethiopia was never colonised.

to a large extent borrowing from and modelled upon European institutions. By the end of the 1960s only Portugal retained substantial overseas possessions.

One immediate impact of this development was that scholars in the West began to focus on the political dynamic between the central government of the USSR and the outlying republics, and between the Russians and the peoples they dominated. The purpose was to determine whether the Soviet Union could be described as a colonial empire analogous to those of Britain or France. If it could be shown that the USSR was indeed a colonial empire then there would be serious implications for the future of that state since the tide of history seemed to be flowing against such political arrangements.

This understanding appeared to be vindicated not only in the case of the European overseas empires but within the Communist bloc itself. Yugoslavia quickly split from Moscow's supervision, followed in 1960 by Albania. Revolt against Soviet domination broke out throughout the 1950s across Eastern Europe, notably in Hungary (1956) and continued during the 1960s. In 1963, two years after the building of the Berlin Wall, protests occurred in East Germany which were mirrored across the region, most famously in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Despite its claims, Communism seemed not to have solved the 'nationalities question.' This was most forcefully brought home by the Sino-Soviet split of 1961.

The falling out between Moscow and Beijing had an immediate impact on discussions of Central Asia. Commentators were not slow to observe that the region's strategic position, lying between two rival Communist superpowers, greatly increased its importance in world politics. Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay wrote in 1968,

From now on the Soviet Muslims of the Caucasus and Central Asia, and their cousins in Sinkiang... find themselves positioned in the thick of the global political stage, between two great powers with different, indeed divergent strategic positions.³³

Earlier Wheeler had suggested that "Chinese and Soviet fears of attempts to subvert each other's Muslim populations are probably mutual... neither possibility can be altogether excluded"³⁴...The Sino-Soviet rift, if it continues, must have an effect on

Soviet policy not only towards south-west and South Asia, but also towards the Muslim republics of Central Asia.”³⁵

Besides the immediate concern of Soviet-Chinese relations and the role Central Asia might play in them, the split raised another issue. Previously, the only Communist countries to have escaped control by Moscow had been small and of limited strategic value. China was another proposition altogether. It represented another pole of aspiration and source of aid to national liberation movements. More importantly, the rift showed that not only was it possible to be Communist without being tied to Moscow, it was possible to be Communist without being Leninist. China was promoting its own brand of Communism, free of all vestige of the European tutelage Asian peoples were trying to throw off. Maoism was an Asian Communism adapted to meet Asian realities, by for instance replacing the proletariat as the vanguard of the revolution with the peasantry. Particularly in south-east Asia, new Communist anti-colonial movements were taking a Maoist flavour and a more nationalist than internationalist stance.

The attractiveness of ‘Asian Communism’ to Central Asians as against the ‘European Communism’ forced on them by the Soviet regime was an important topic of debate, especially so since Maoism was predicated on the expulsion of foreign invaders as an initial stage in the construction of Communism. Loyalty to Communism no longer implied loyalty to Moscow, and the possibility of what was called ‘National Communism’ developing in Central Asia and the effect this would have on both Soviet and World politics was seriously considered. As one American analyst put it,

Strong national ties often disappear to reappear unexpectedly. The Chinese, Polish and Rumanian developments should remind us that, contrary to Soviet claims, the Socialist ‘transformation’ does not eliminate national loyalty but instead may revitalise it. In the Central Asian case, it is possible that advancing socialism may even create a new stimulus for the emergence of nationalist sentiment.³⁶

At the same time, increasing recognition was made of the fact that a form of ‘Asian Communism’ which advocated colonial revolution and national independence, which analysts sometimes referred to as ‘Sultangalievism’ after Sultan Galiev, its

principal exponent, had already been developed within the Soviet Union. 'Sultangalievism' was according to one authority "the only attempt [prior to Mao] to define the revolutionary process in the colonial world."³⁷ Galiev's programme "to liberate the Orient from the grip of Imperialism"³⁸ and to create "a Communism Orientalised and directed by Orientals"³⁹ could be directly compared to Maoist doctrine. The similarity of Sultangalievism to Maoism was highlighted in Bennigsen's and Lemerrier-Quelquejay's 1960 study of Sultan Galiev when they wrote that "the colonial revolution has triumphed over a wide area... the revolutionary strategy in the East is now close to the theses which Sultan Galiev defended in 1918."⁴⁰ In a later work of Bennigsen,⁴¹ the ideas of Sultan Galiev were explicitly linked to those of Ho Chi Minh, Mao and Ahmed Ben Bella, the leader of the Algerian Liberation Movement.^{vii} In fact,

Almost without exception, the main tenets of Muslim national communism as they were articulated by Sultan Galiev and his companions in the 1920s have been adopted in a like or slightly modified shape by virtually every present-day national liberation movement.⁴²

There might be seen to be a degree of continuity between events and ideas dating from the Russian Revolution and today. Maxime Rodinson, the noted French scholar of relations between Islam and Communism, observed that "people, or at least human groupings, tie their destinies to the great issues whose details are constantly changing but which remain nonetheless essentially the same over the centuries and millennia. 'The future resembles the past more than one drop of water resembles another' wrote the great Arab philosopher Ibn Khaldun."⁴³ The 'issue' Rodinson had highlighted he expressed as a conflict between tradition and modernity which was manifest in opposition to the vested interests of ruling groups. He continued to suggest that if in the 'free' world this opposition took the form of Communist or Socialist organisations, "perhaps in the Communist world oppositions will take as their rallying sign the national emblem."⁴⁴ Gerhard von Mende had earlier expressed the idea that indigenous reformist and anti-colonial movements in Central Asia had been overtaken by events, that as d'Encausse put it, "the Revolution came ten years too soon."⁴⁵ According to Michael Rywkin, "as has since been demonstrated, both Sultan Galiev and Ryskulov [a friend of Galiev] were about thirty-five years in advance of their time and

^{vii} Ironically, according to this source, Ben Bella leant of Sultan Galiev from Bennigsen's own work.

geographically misplaced.”⁴⁶ If this had been the case, it seemed that now the conditions for an anti-colonial revolt were being met.

An anti-colonial movement assumes the existence of a colonial dynamic. The question of whether the Soviet Union operated a colonial system was not altogether new. Anti-Soviet propagandists had frequently described the country as an ‘Empire’ and some works of the 1950s had addressed the Soviet political dispensation, but in the 1960s serious debate about the colonial dynamic became a commonplace as British and French scholars absorbed the lessons of their own countries’ retreat from empire. The language of this debate came ultimately to dominate all discussion of Central Asia as it was predicated on what came to be seen as an irreconcilable conflict between the European world and the non-European which demanded national self-determination for non-European peoples. The fact that since the creation in 1922 of the Irish Free State there had been no major separatist movements in Europe served to heighten this dichotomy between European and non-European which could be better expressed in cultural than racial terms and which ran through the USSR, making it seem likely that the primary conflict within that country would be that between Europeans and Asians. To this basic European - non-European divide events in the US added another dimension, that of a split between Christian and Muslim.

The American experience of Islam was quite different to that of Britain or France. Whereas the latter had governed large and varied Muslim populations and were aware of the wide variety of Muslim responses to Western rule and Western ideas, the American experience had been limited to the relatively insignificant Muslim population of the Philippines. This was to change with the founding in the 1950s of the first indigenous Western Islamic movement, Elijah Muhammed’s Nation of Islam, which rose to prominence during the campaign for Civil Rights.

As a movement for the empowerment of disadvantaged African-Americans, the Nation was as much a political as a spiritual movement, challenging the status quo in American society. African-American identity had traditionally been channelled into Evangelical Christianity, especially the Baptist Church, which had tended to support many of the values of the dominant White society. The Nation of Islam however

proposed that since Whites refused to accept Blacks as their equals, the appropriate response was to reject a White culture symbolised by Christianity and adopt a more 'authentic' non-European culture in place of the one forced on Africans under slavery. During the Civil Rights Movement, whilst Christian leaders such as Dr Martin Luther King called for the full integration of Blacks into American society, the Nation's leaders Louis Farrakhan and Malcolm X increasingly advocated withdrawal from White America both as a culture and ultimately as a state. When a high-profile convert such as Muhammed Ali publicly made an issue of rejecting his 'slave name' or refused the draft to Vietnam, the perception of Islam in America was one of an indigestible 'other' which refused to integrate into the American 'melting pot'.

The implications of such a view of Islam in a Soviet context are apparent when a development within the USSR itself is taken into account. Internal debates on inter-ethnic relations conducted in 1966-1967 resulted in the promulgation of a new cultural policy. *Sblizheniye*, 'coming together', was to be replaced by *sliyaniye*, the fusion of distinct peoples and cultures into a single Soviet whole. At first glance this might seem similar to the American 'melting pot' theory in which different peoples unite to create an entirely new nation with a distinctive culture, and in fact one American scholar did directly compare the US to the USSR as being of similar age, forward-looking, impatient of their roots and Millennial in the sense of being predicated on the concept of an immanent ideal future. There was however a crucial difference. The majority of Americans were, or were the descendants of, recently-arrived immigrants for whom the attraction of America was precisely this new culture. By contrast, Soviet citizens lived in their historic homelands, "surrounded by places and monuments with strong national associations... in the one case we are dealing with a new nation created as it were through a voluntary multinational effort; in the other with an ordinary empire of many nations dominated by one."⁴⁷ If Islam was an indigestible other rejecting European culture in the USA, it would be more so in the Soviet Union.

This view of Islam as being essentially rejecting of Western beliefs was enhanced by the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. The stunning defeat by Israel of the Arab states was interpreted in the Middle East as indicative of the failure of Western methods applied in a Muslim context. The Socialist policies of Nasser and his reliance on the Soviet Union

as a source of aid were seen to be lacking. America's protégé Israel was already perceived in the region as essentially anti-Islamic, and the failure of the Soviet Union to protect Muslim states from defeat contributed to an anti-European sentiment in the Middle East which was manifest in opposition to the Europeanising governing elites of the Arab world. One British scholar has expressed this change thus:

The prestige of the USSR was severely damaged [since] the Soviet Union was held partly responsible for the misinformation which had contributed to the outbreak of war and was blamed by the Arabs for failing to support them.⁴⁸

The Western Powers were seen as pro-Israeli and thus as anti-Islamic. The paramount Eastern Power appeared to be no better. In its failure to support the Arabs it was no better than the 'crusading' nations which sought to emasculate the Muslim Middle East. If Suez had served to vindicate Arab Socialism, the Six Day War fatally damaged it.

The repercussions of the Arab defeat of 1967 were not to be fully worked out until a decade later, but its immediate impact was to undermine the secularist, Westernising impulse of the previous twenty years. According to Dilip Hiro, "the humiliating defeat that the Israelis inflicted on Egypt... dealt a grievous blow to the semi-secular Arab socialism of Nasser."⁴⁹ As John Esposito put it, "the complete and decisive nature of the defeat at the hands of Israel in 1967 shattered faith and confidence in the West and in Arab nationalism."⁵⁰ Neither Western democracy nor Soviet-sponsored Arab nationalism met the demands of the peoples of the Middle East, and in the next decade the region's people were increasingly thrown back on their own resources in a development which had an impact on the Western perception not only of Soviet Islam but of Islam as a whole.

1.iv) The 1970s & 1980s

In 1975 Sayyid Qutb, the leader of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, expressed the Arab, and by implication Muslim situation, as being caught between two powerful factions neither of which was friendly towards Muslims.

There are two huge blocs: the Communist Bloc in the East and the Capitalist Bloc in the West... it is clear that both the Western Bloc and the Eastern Bloc are fighting over the world... As for us, what is our own stake in this struggle? We have recently experienced in Palestine that neither the Eastern Bloc nor the Western Bloc give any credence to the values they advocate, or consider us ourselves as of consequence.⁵¹

Qutb had initially been a supporter of the Free Officers' movement but had become disaffected with the Arab Socialism of Nasser and Anwar Sadat, seeing Egypt's governors as having failed its people not only on the international stage but domestically. Islamic ideologies offered a 'Third Way' for the development of Muslim countries independently of the Great Powers which were at best indifferent to and often cynically manipulative of Muslims. The craving for a Third Way in the Muslim world was expressed in Iran at the time of the Revolution by the slogan 'Neither East nor West but Islam.'

The growth of Islamist groups in the Middle East followed the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, which was widely perceived as a victory for Islam. "The year 1973 proved to be decisive, providing a sign that Muslim fortunes were indeed changing."⁵² The increase in oil prices resulting from the war forced home to the West its dependence on the Middle East and the imperative to retain friendly regional governments, governments which were increasingly being challenged by Islamist groups.

Few of the Islamic movements which came to prominence during the 1970s were new. The Muslim Brotherhood had originally been founded in 1928. Khomeini had spoken out against the Shah in 1964. It was only in the 1970s though that such movements began to be noticed in the West, which was wary of any Middle Eastern movement which threatened its interests in the region. In part as a the result of terrorist activity by the PLO which after 1967 took on an international aspect aimed as much against US citizens as against the Jewish State, the association of 'Muslim' with 'terrorist' and 'political revolutionary'^{viii} began to be formed in the minds of many in the West.

^{viii} Monteil writes about Western perception of the Muslim world and hostility to Muslims in *Les Musulmans soviétiques*, pp.211-249

The growth of Islamic movements was linked in one study to the earlier Muslim National Communism. Islamic trends were another manifestation of an anti-colonial strategy in the Middle East directed as much against Communism as against the West.

The early attempts by the Muslim national communists to "Marxify" Islam in recent years have been followed throughout the Islamic world by the inverse process of "Islamizing" Marxism...

The "Islamization" of Marxism suggests that many Muslim leaders have reversed the order of the two in their own minds in terms of the power of each to mobilize revolutionary energies. Islam is acquiring new meaning as a mobilization system in their eyes; radical Muslim ideologies, like the Ikhwan al-Musulmin ("Muslim Brothers") or Muammer Khadafi's neo-Jamaledin al-Afghanist pan-Islamism are challenging - often victoriously - the spread of communism in the Third World.⁵³

In 1978 this mobilising ability of Islam was co-opted by Zia ul-Haq in Pakistan when he announced the Islamisation of his country, reversing the secular socialist policy of his predecessor Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Four years earlier Turkey had invaded Cyprus, prompting the US to impose sanctions on the former country despite the fact that previously it had been one of Washington's few regional allies. Lebanon split along religious lines in 1976 into factions which gradually became more and more radical in their ideologies. It seemed that battle lines were literally being drawn between the Muslim and the European worlds, an impression strengthened when Sadat was assassinated by members of the radical Jama'at al-Jihad in reprisal for signing the Camp David accord, an act which "was viewed by Egyptian critics, as well as by most Arab Muslim governments... as a unilateral capitulation to Israel and, by extension, its American patron."⁵⁴

At the same time that Islamist movements were gaining momentum in the Middle East, new data appeared from the USSR which suggested that the relationship between Russians and Central Asians was about to change radically. The 1970 Soviet census revealed that the birth-rate of the Slavic population was in decline whilst that of the traditionally Muslim peoples continued to increase. This it was thought would shift the balance of political and economic power within the Soviet Union away from Europe towards Central Asia. The census also showed that Central Asians were unwilling to travel elsewhere in the USSR in search of work, creating a local labour surplus in an economically under-developed area. Rakowska-Harmstone noted that population

patterns created an ethnic dimension to income disparities which could fuel nationalist resentments.

...urban areas tend to be dominated by nonindigenous national groups, mostly Russians. This fact imparts ethnic overtones to the antagonism over disparities in the quality of urban vs. rural life... This problem has been particularly acute in the southeastern portions of the USSR where a combination of high fertility rates and low skill-levels has created large rural labor surpluses even while there have been shortages of skilled manpower in urban-industrial centres... The deficiency in urban skilled labour has been filled by immigration... [which] contributed to urban-rural and ethnic conflicts.⁵⁵

Rakowska-Harmstone cited Soviet sources which indicated that nationalism as an expression of political discontent was more prevalent in rural than urban areas, and that in many cases this was linked to religious identity.

In 1979 two events took place which again altered perceptions of Central Asia. On January 16th the Shah of Iran fled his country. Soon afterwards he was replaced by Ruholla Khomeini, who announced an Islamic Republic. In December Soviet troops entered Afghanistan in support of the ruling Marxist PDPA, which had seized power the previous year but had failed to consolidate control of a number of provinces where it was opposed by groups claiming an Islamic ideology. Although in terms of international law the Soviet presence was at the request of the Afghan government,^{ix} it was presented in the West as a Soviet invasion of a neutral neighbouring country. Radical Islam had triumphed in one country at the expense of one of America's closest allies. In another, Muslim opposition groups were waging war on the Soviet Union. This had an immediate effect on the Western approach to Soviet Islam.

The Iranian revolution and the subsequent Soviet invasion of Afghanistan abruptly awakened the West to the revolutionary potential of Islam and focused attention on the long-forgotten Muslims of the Soviet Union.⁵⁶

Whereas in the 1950s and 1960s Western attention had focused on the possible influence of the Soviet Union over the Middle East, this was now reversed.

^{ix} In 1978 a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation had been signed between Moscow and Kabul. Article 4 of the Treaty stated that the two parties 'shall consult with each other and take, by agreement, appropriate measures to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity of the two countries'. President Amin invoked this to obtain Soviet assistance after PDPA leaders had been killed in Kabul. See Hiro (1989) p.253.

A turning point in the history of Soviet Islam came in 1978, with two major external events: the downfall of the Shah of Iran followed by the triumph of the Islamic revolution in Iran and the April (*Saur*) Communist revolution in Afghanistan... transforming this relatively quiet territory into a boiling revolutionary cauldron, whose upheavals may have unpredictable consequences all round, and first and foremost for the Soviet Union... the Middle East appears a potential source of trouble for the USSR, an area from which various subversive and radical ideologies may penetrate and contaminate Soviet Islam.⁵⁷

The same source considered that

Soviet Islam, stultified by decades of conformity to stale Russian Marxism, has nothing to offer Muslims abroad at the political level. On the contrary, it is the Soviet Muslims who are likely to be influenced by the ideas (perhaps even by the political terrorism and guerrilla methods) adopted by the newly radicalised Middle East.⁵⁸

Western scholars began to talk of a 'spillage' of ideas over the Soviet border from both Iran and Afghanistan resulting from the fact that with the invasion the Iron Curtain had been breached on its southern flank. The same peoples, Azeris, Turkmen, Uzbeks, Tadjiks, lived on either side of the border. Iran was actively trying to export its revolution. The fact that Soviet Central Asian troops had been withdrawn from Afghanistan to be replaced by Slavs suggested that what Bennigsen called 'contamination' had occurred there, and at least one Afghan opposition group talked about taking the war into the USSR and on occasion claimed already to have done so.

Although Arjomand has presented a strong case for viewing Islamic 'fundamentalism' as a new and radical religious movement responsive to very specific local conditions, it was easier and it might be argued more politically expedient to explain this otherwise seemingly inexplicable phenomenon as highly conservative quasi-medievalism. "Look at the cover illustration of the German *Spiegel* magazine of 12th February 1979: a turbaned and bearded horseman with a sword displayed, carrying behind him a miserable creature entirely wrapped in black veils. The caption: 'Return to the Middle Ages'."⁵⁹

Soviet Islam was also seen as being essentially conservative. The dust-jacket of Bennigsen's and Wimbush's 1985 *Mystics and Commissars* showed a photograph of a bearded and turbaned man in an image reminiscent of depictions of the Iranian

revolutionary leadership. It was in fact a portrait of the Imam ShamyI, the leader of the so-called Murid Wars against Russia in the 19th Century. The implication was that Soviet Islam had at least the potential to become a revolutionary anti-imperialist movement like that in Iran. At the time of Brezhnev's death, Islam was seen as the principle internal threat to the USSR.

1.v) Conclusion

Historical events have affected the way in which Central Asia has been discussed in the West from the Great Game onwards. They determined not only what was said, but who said it and where. The historical framework is the primary context in which to consider Western studies of Soviet Central Asia which were predicated on the West's need to understand its Soviet rival in a world which had become dominated by two competing ideologies and its desire to find weak spots in the USSR's defences. In the 1950s the primary concern was with the threat of the Soviet Union expanding its influence, and the possible role of Soviet Central Asians as a conduit for Soviet propaganda in the Middle East. In the 1960s with the collapse of the British and French Empires discussion came to be couched in terms of colonialism, the anti-colonial dynamic and the likelihood of the Soviet 'Empire' meeting the same fate as other European empires. Having placed the terms of reference within a colonialist discourse, the appearance from the 1970s of Islamic 'fundamentalism' in the Middle East as a new expression of anti-colonialism fighting not overt Western power but Western ideologies made an anti-colonial revolt in Central Asia seem likely.

The Soviet union is a multinational empire that is susceptible to all of the divisive internal and external pressures that have destroyed other multinational empires. The Soviet Muslim borderlands are the classic soft underbelly of the empire.⁶⁰

...a Soviet Muslim and a Muslim from abroad feel completely at home with each other... [they] display the same attitude of deeply rooted mistrust toward the non-Muslim West (represented by Americans and Europeans in the Middle East and by Russians in Central Asia). In short they are brethren facing together a hostile world.⁶¹

The expectation of an anti-colonial movement and the search for a vehicle for such a movement was to provide the basis for the bulk of Western scholarship of Central Asia throughout the Cold War.

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- ¹ Dobson (1890) p.32
² Curzon (1889) p.ix
³ Hourani (1983) p.109
⁴ Esposito (1991) p.41
⁵ Lansdell (1885) Vol.2 p.300
⁶ Vámbéry (1968) p.3
⁷ Skrine & Ross (1899) p.335
⁸ *ibid.* p.376
⁹ both *ibid.* p.413
¹⁰ *ibid.* p.412
¹¹ Caroe (1953) p.6
¹² Wallace (1946) p.205
¹³ *ibid.* p.204
¹⁴ Leshem (1953) p.10
¹⁵ Halpern (1953) p.28
¹⁶ Monteil (1953) p.43: 'It has been said and freely written that Communist evangelism appeals to the basic tendency in Islam which is *anti-capitalist*.'
¹⁷ Halpern (1953) p.28
¹⁸ *ibid.* p.34
¹⁹ Monteil (1953) pp.126, 143
²⁰ Jafri (1953) p.163
²¹ Martin (1956) p.52
²² Downto (1955) p.130
²³ Polk (1991) p.205
²⁴ Yapp (1991) p.402
²⁵ Polk (1991) p.206
²⁶ Yapp (1991) p.103
²⁷ Martin (1956) p.54
²⁸ Wheeler (1956) "Introduction", *CAR* I:1. No page number.
²⁹ Wheeler (1954) p.179
³⁰ Yapp (1991) p.412
³¹ Wheeler (1954) p.179
³² von Mende "Preface" in Hayit (1956) p.5
³³ Bennigsen & Lemercier-Quelquejay (1968) p.7
³⁴ Wheeler (1966) p.90
³⁵ Wheeler (1964) p.232
³⁶ Carlisle (1967) p.134
³⁷ Bennigsen (1958a) p.400
³⁸ *ibid.* p.404
³⁹ *ibid.* p.411
⁴⁰ Bennigsen & Lemercier-Quelquejay (1960) p.195
⁴¹ Bennigsen & Wimbush (1979) pp.110, 112
⁴² *ibid.* p.116
⁴³ Rodinson *Preface* in d'Encausse (1966) p.7
⁴⁴ *ibid.* p.15
⁴⁵ d'Encausse (1966) p.280
⁴⁶ Rywkin (1963) p.47
⁴⁷ Pipes (1964) p.3
⁴⁸ Yapp (1991) p.418
⁴⁹ Hiro (1988) p.68
⁵⁰ Esposito (1991) p.154
⁵¹ cited in Haddad, Y. "Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival" in Esposito (1983) p.73
⁵² Esposito (1984) p.155
⁵³ Bennigsen & Wimbush (1979) pp.124, 125
⁵⁴ Esposito (1984) p.220
⁵⁵ Rakowska-Harmstone (1974) p.6

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- ⁵⁶ **Karpat (1983) p.71**
⁵⁷ **Bennigsen & Broxup (1983) pp.108, 109**
⁵⁸ *ibid.* p.117
⁵⁹ **Monteil (1982) p.222**
⁶⁰ **Wimbush (1986) p.230**
⁶¹ **Bennigsen (1980) p.39**

Chapter 2: Colonialism and Central Asia

2.i) Introduction

The language of colonialism and concepts about colonial dynamics infused much of what was written about Central Asia after the War. Central Asia could be seen as a non-European area under European domination analogous to the overseas empires of Britain and France. Although geographer A. Nove and Soviet Studies lecturer J. Newth, both of Glasgow University, wrote, “there is no point in starting such a study [of Soviet Central Asia] with an already held conviction that these are colonies exploited by Moscow for its own evil purposes”¹ such a conviction formed the underlying basis of the bulk of Western writing on the area.

Many analysts took it for granted that the relationship between Central Asia and Moscow was a colonial one. This is reflected in the titles of works such as *British and Soviet Colonial Systems* (1951); *Russia and her Colonies* (1952); *Soviet Empire* (1953); *The Last Empire* (1962); *L'Empire éclaté* (1978) and *Muslims of the Soviet Empire* (1985). This assumption informs one definition of colonies in the Soviet context as “ethnically non-Russian territories.”² A part of the Soviet Union could be described as a colony simply by dint of its not being predominantly Russian.

During the 1950s and 1960s British works used the language of empire in referring to Central Asia in part because British scholars of the region were often veterans of the Indian Civil Service. The French tended to be more circumspect, using the terms ‘Soviet Union’ or ‘USSR’ in place of ‘Soviet Empire’. This did not prevent them writing of the Soviet Union in terms of imperialism or comparing Soviet policies in non-European areas with French ones. Structurally, the Soviet Union appeared similar to the French Union established in 1946 as a compromise between subservience and independence for non-Europeans. Writers such as Egretaud proposed the adoption of the Soviet ‘colonial’ system as a means of preserving France’s own empire. Monteil’s *Essai sur l’Islam en URSS* compared Soviet Central Asia to French Algeria and Senegal, contrasting ‘Soviet’ with ‘Colonial’ Islam and suggesting that,

critically followed, Soviet policy could serve as the means by which France might preserve its African possessions.

If British and French scholars used a colonial framework for their analysis of Soviet Asia in part as a result of their own experiences of managing empires, in the case of the USA the use of colonial language had a more overt political purpose. 'Empire' could be used to demonise the Soviet Union.

Anti-colonialism forms part of the US founding-myth. In the popular imagination the US defines itself as the defender of liberty against imperial oppression, giving that country a certain moral superiority, as Kohn observed when he wrote that "American thinking about colonialism has been largely influenced by emotional misunderstandings."³ Empire in the American popular view is almost by definition tyrannical. If the US is the land in which there is 'no taxation without representation,' an empire in the American popular imagining is the precise opposite. The American expansion westwards, the conquering and annexation of territory from Mexico (1840) and Spain (1898) and the deposition of the Hawaiian monarchy are not popularly perceived as imperialist acts. This attitude gives the colonialist/imperialist discourse great propaganda value, since merely to call a state an empire is to imply that it embodies the negation of American values. In the popular television series 'Star Trek' the citizens of the 'United Federation of Planets' are characterised by rationality, love of freedom, respect for the rights of the individual and political non-interventionism. Their enemies, inhabiting a feudal and capriciously violent society, belong to the 'Klingon Empire'. Likewise, the enormously successful film 'Star Wars' (1977) pits a 'rebel alliance' against a shadowy 'Empire' which is an embodiment of evil.

In the immediate post-War era this anti-imperial attitude was harder to sustain in countries which themselves maintained empires. As the pace of decolonisation accelerated as a result of both opposition in the colonies themselves and domestic public opinion, the 'colonial' epithet came more and more to be used as a term of opprobrium. The Swiss scholar Lüthy wrote of the phrase 'Soviet Imperialism', "This easily becomes the childish game of throwing a slander back to the slanderer: 'Colonialists!' - 'Colonialists yourself!'"⁴

Colonial discourse became a tool in the propaganda war between the Soviet Union and the West, a point alluded to by B.G.D. Folsom when he wrote that “There is a tendency (fanned no doubt by the desire to bask in the sunshine of anti-colonial sentiment) to discuss the Soviet nationalities question in terms of colonialism and imperialism... This comprises the position ‘We are virtuous non-colonial people. They are evil colonial oppressors.’”⁵

2.ii) What is Colonialism?

Given that discourse on Central Asia throughout the Cold War period was intimately connected with the issues of colonialism and anti-colonialism, it might come as a surprise that few writers on the area directly addressed the question of what colonialism entailed. Colonial discourse was so embedded in the way the West thought about the multi-national state that it was not thought necessary to explain what colonialism was. This was true even of theoretical works. Lüthy complained that “The Foreign Policy Research Institute of the University of Pennsylvania published a collective study on *The Idea of Colonialism*. I have read it carefully, but could not find what this idea was, or who ever held it.”⁶

The nearest the work got to a clear definition of what a colony was is to be found in Kohn’s opening chapter.⁷ Kohn starts with the assertion that not every imperial relationship is a colonial one, although Lüthy wrote “In its current use [colonialism] seems to be a synonym of imperialism.”⁸ ‘Empire’ to Kohn was the expansion of a state into a coterminous territory. He identified five types of imperial relationship, of which one was colonial. The non-colonial relations comprised the granting of autonomy within an empire (Habsburg Hungary or Romanov Finland), the annihilation of the indigenes (USA), the maintenance of natives in an inferior position (South Africa), and the granting of citizenship to the conquered peoples leading to their absorption, as was occurring to the Welsh. Kohn then defined a colonial relationship:

a colonial relationship is created when one nation establishes and maintains political domination over a geographically external political unit inhabited by people of any race and at any stage of cultural development. It is terminated whenever the subject people becomes fully self-governing as an autonomous state, whether independent or as a voluntary associate within an imperial or commonwealth partnership from which it may withdraw at will. It is also terminated whenever a subject people becomes assimilated into the political structure of the colonial power on equal terms, or when their political unit is thus assimilated.⁹

This definition is confused. Later Kohn simplifies his argument: "Reduced to its barest outline, colonialism is foreign rule imposed upon a people,"¹⁰ a conception similar to Lüthy's "domination of one country by another."¹¹

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines 'colony' as "settlement of settlers in a new country forming a community fully or partly subject to another state" and 'colonialism' as "policy of maintaining colonies, alleged exploitation of backward or weak peoples." The first definition illustrates the dual meaning of 'colony' as both a group of people and a territory controlled by but not annexed to another polity. The concept that this community is controlled by *another* state is important, implying as it does a political distinction between the colony and the 'motherland'. It can be imputed that if no such distinction exists, and the two parts constitute a single political entity, a colonial situation does not exist. The second part of the definition suggests that such control is essentially exploitative in nature.

This comes close to Nove's and Newth's definition of a colony as a country whose economy serves to benefit an outside power. In this situation industry is underdeveloped, profits are exported rather than locally reinvested, and the colonised population is poorly educated, underpaid, and excluded from political power.¹² This could be slightly modified by recourse to what they called "colonialism *à la française*" in which conquered territories were annexed and regarded as an integral part of a single state.

There was a corollary to the French system. If what we might call 'classical' colonialisms ignored the educational needs of subject peoples, 'French' colonialism offered a type of equality achievable through a cultural assimilation which itself implied

the denigration of local mores. Ross somewhat tartly explained, "French culture saw itself as something universal, the pinnacle of human society."¹³ Seton-Watson wrote that "The French Empire went somewhat further [than the British] in creating an ideology. Its *mission civilitrice* included a more clearly understood concept of a French culture, and even a French nationality, which was to be accessible to all. There was the intention of creating Asian and African Frenchmen..."¹⁴ The governing Power is presented as in all ways superior to its vassals, not only in terms of technological, economic or military might but in its essence. Nadel and Curtis claimed,

Implicit in such phrases as *la mission civilitrice* or *l'amité protectrice* was the assumption of a relationship of mutual advantage. France needed colonies in order to advance her *grandeur*, the colonies needed French manufactures and civilisation in order to enter the modern world.¹⁵

French colonialism had a cultural dimension absent from its British equivalent. It remained colonialism since it emphasised the superiority of the metropolis over the colony to the detriment of the latter. In both its economic and cultural forms the colonial dynamic involves the subservience of one people to the demands of another.

The idea of an unequal exchange being fundamental to colonial relations was stressed by Nadel and Curtis when they made their distinction between imperialism and colonialism. Colonialism, they implied, was a function of imperialism, however the former term had come to be used almost exclusively in a pejorative sense.

By Imperialism we mean the extension of sovereignty or control... by one government, nation or society over another... Imperialism is essentially about power... Underlying all forms of Imperialism is the belief - at times unshakeable - of the imperial agent or nation in an inherent right, based on moral superiority as well as material might, to impose its pre-eminent values and techniques on the 'inferior' indigenous nation or society...¹⁶

Whereas 'Imperialism' enjoyed at least a genuine if fleeting respectability, 'colonialism' is most commonly used today to connote the oppression, humiliation, or exploitation of indigenous peoples...¹⁷

Colonialism represents the dominance of one area over another, an imbalance of political, economic and cultural power.

Although imperialism had not historically been the exclusive preserve of Europeans, it “today means, above all, European rule over non-Europeans.”¹⁸ This was manifest in anti-colonial movements. Palmer observed that “since [colonial] situations have usually been characterised by Western (white) control over (coloured) Asians or Africans, it is perhaps natural that colonialism in Indian minds should be associated with peoples of white skins.”¹⁹ This idea that colonisers were white and the colonised non-white was powerful enough to re-emerge in a passage written twenty-five years later:

In the case of colonial society, there are always clear distinguishing marks between the colonisers or imperialists and the native people of the colony... sharp distinctions based upon appearance, history or ethnicity are drawn... [Colonial societies include] a group from the metropolis who... exploit the racially distinct peasants.²⁰

From these claims a picture of what colonialism is emerges. ‘Colonialism’ firstly means the domination of one society by another. In this situation the dominators remain aloof from the dominated. Plamenetz emphasised this in stating that

the Europeans remained aliens in Asia and Africa because they deliberately held themselves aloof from the natives...²¹

It was this aloofness which to Plamenetz distinguished British rule in India from that of any other conquer, such as the Moguls. The latter had become Indians in a way that the former had never done and had never intended doing. This was one of the features which set the British Empire apart as ‘colonialist’ in a way that the Roman, to use Plamenetz’s example, never was.

The Romans, in the process of establishing their empire, created a cosmopolitan privileged class recruited from all peoples in the empire. The members of this class had a double loyalty, to Rome and to the places of their birth. [Rome] allowed men of all nationalities to rise high in her service... [Romans] mixed with the powerful and wealthy among the natives to form a cosmopolitan class sharing a Graeco-Roman culture. They did this without detaching the members of this class from the countries of their birth; it was not only possible, it was easy and natural to have a double loyalty.²²

In this respect, the Roman Empire differed from the French, which could not allow a dual loyalty, insisting rather on full association with metropolitan culture even to the extent of rejecting the aspirant’s own background.

Many scholars made the claim that whatever the moral implications of European dominance of the non-European world, such dominance had occurred and had been instrumental in 'modernising' the colonised areas. This meant the introduction of European commercial and social relations. A corollary of 'modernisation' was the assumption by colonised peoples of European ideas of political freedom and of human equality. If these were denied, as was the case in a colonial environment, resentment might be expected. Plamenetz, discussing the possibility of 'home rule' for the European colonies observed that

if [a non-European] feels himself despised or excluded, he resents the treatment meted out to him...

...cold disdain begets hot resentment... it is absurd to put yourself forward as a foreign ruler anxious to raise a subject people to full equality with yourself and still to treat those of them who have risen highest by your own standards as if they could not, whatever they did, become entirely fit for the company of people like yourself.²³

Building on the theme, Plamenetz contrasted the old empires in which Europeans dominated other Europeans with the new-style dominance of Europeans over non-Europeans:

The Magyars, who hated Slav nationalism more than the Austrians did, were very willing to accept a Slav as an equal and as a compatriot if only he would behave appropriately... no such compromise is offered to the coloured man ruled by Europeans; he is treated as an inferior merely on account of his colour... The Europeans in practise refuse him equality whatever he may do to deserve it, and he is therefore condemned to perpetual inferiority while he lives in their society and under their government. To feel equal to them as a person, to regain his self-respect, he needs, as no white man does, to belong to a community quite independent to them.²⁴

Colonialism comprises not only the domination of one society over another but the maintenance of that domination by denying certain rights to one group which are accorded the other. Palmer, returning to popular Indian conceptions of colonialism, placed political impotence at the hands of an outside power at the head of his list of the characteristics of a colonial situation.

In common Indian usage colonialism is variously defined as the denial of the 'right' to self-determination and self government, the imposition of foreign control on a people without their consent, imperialistic territorial aggrandisement,

or political or economic exploitation. Almost by definition it produces such by-products as racial discrimination, despotism, and human and national degradation.²⁵

The racial aspect of colonialism remains important in maintaining the dependency required of a colonial situation. Without a visible distinction it becomes impossible to treat the subject people as less than equals. They might become fully assimilated to the metropolis, acquiring the rights of the metropolitans, as did what we would now call 'indigenous ethnic minorities' in European states such as the Cornish in Britain, or ruler and ruled might merge within the colony itself and develop as a state apart from the metropolis. This is what occurred in what have been called the 'old empires' in the Americas. In the 'new' empires of the C19th the ruling class as representing the 'mother country' owed its authority to its difference from the native. As Plamenetz stated, "the Europeans in Asia had more to lose than to gain by social integration with the native people."²⁶

Racial and cultural distinction was essential to the colonial relationship. It followed from this that relations between European peoples were not of a colonial nature but relations between Europeans and non-Europeans could be. Within the British Empire a distinction was made between 'Dominions' and 'Colonies'.

The Dominions established in 1926 were Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Irish Free State and Newfoundland. According to Stahl, all had "large settled white communities of British stock."²⁷ The Dominions were autonomous states within the Empire with their own political and legal institutions based on but distinct from the British, equal in status to Britain and voluntarily associated with her. In effect they were independent.

By contrast, Britain's colonies had overwhelmingly non-European populations. They were characterised by the weakness of both their social and political institutions which necessitated the retention of a high degree of control by London. "Whenever the mother country considers that her vital interests are at stake, imperial considerations will if necessary over-ride purely local ones."²⁸

A Dominion was in a position of strength because its political and social institutions were European, in other words they were a match for those of the metropolis. It is significant that Stahl described the Ukraine as a Dominion of greater Russia and Central Asia as a colony.²⁹ Stahl made the equation of colonial status with being non-European explicit.

Within the Union, the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic remains inevitably, like the Great Russia of the Tsars which it incorporated, the centre of power. Certain other republics by reason of their large settled white populations and economic strength carry authority... other republics on the perimeter in Asia are, beneath their nominal equality with the rest, dependent or colonial areas, as they were in the days of the Tsars. The five republics of Central Asia... represent areas of rule over indigenous peoples and compare, in fact, with the orthodox colonies of other Powers.³⁰

A colony could only attain the strength necessary for equality by Europeanising. The Europeanising effect of the colonial experience and the consequences for both colonisers and colonised played a major part in the literature on the subject. At this stage we should note only the equations Dominion=European=Equal; Colony=Non-European=Subordinate.

Differentiation of this kind seems to be in operation even in those cases where European parts of the Soviet Union are described as colonies. In a chapter heading in *The Last Empire* (1962) Robert Conquest, formerly of the British Foreign Office, described the Baltic States as "The World's Newest Colonies." However, Conquest devoted just one chapter to the Baltic region, whilst the Caucasus and Central Asia merited two chapters each. When in the same work Conquest discussed the impact of Russian imperialism on the cultures and religions of subject peoples he ignored Europeans. Colonialism is essentially a question of European dominance of non-Europeans.

In the late 1960s Armstrong made a similar comparison when he categorised the relationship between the Russians and the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union. He typified Ukrainians as 'younger brothers', a people "low in social mobilisation, yet close to the dominant ethnic group in major cultural aspects"³¹ comparable to lowland Scots in Britain, whose cultural difference was not great enough to impede their

integration into all aspects of society or their identification with the state as their state, irrespective of whether they retained cultural distinctiveness. Armstrong's other three categories of Soviet peoples included 'colonials'. Of the fourteen European peoples Armstrong named, not one falls into this category. The Balts shared with the Georgians the category 'state nations'. Conversely, the ten named 'colonial' peoples were all traditionally Muslim and with two exceptions (Chechen and Tadjik) speakers of Turkic languages. No culturally Muslim or linguistically Turkic group appeared in any other category. This shows the dual equation Colonial=Non-European; European=Non-Colonial in operation.

Armstrong defined colonials as

a subject nationality sharply differentiated from the dominant group in cultural background, physical appearance, and degree of social mobilisation. Typically, colonials are just entering the transition to modernised society. The traditional culture pattern of the colonials (frequently shaped by a religion very different from the dominant group's) is regarded by the dominant elite as a barrier to modernisation.³²

This statement recalls the French notion of the necessity of adopting French culture as a pre-requisite of social and political advancement.

'Colonialism' appears in the final analysis to comprise a collection of vaguely related phenomena connected with the exercise of power. In the first instance it is a situation in which one ethnic group exercises authority over another. The powerful group exercises this authority for its own material and economic benefit without regard to the needs or aspirations of the dominated. The powerful group is not indigenous to the area in which its authority is exercised, and is resistant to 'indigenisation' through social or cultural mixing or miscegenation. This group regards its own culture as superior to, and its social and political structures as more 'advanced' than, those of the dominated group and may seek to modify the latter's culture and institutions in the interest of its own view of 'progress'. In almost all cases the powerful group is of European origin. In no case is the dominated group European, since the necessary degree of inequality does not exist between European peoples nor between Europeans and non-Europeans to the former's disadvantage.

2.iii) Colonialism in Central Asia

Mr Krushev is not a Tadjik. He is a Russian. He issues orders from Moscow. He bases his power on the unified Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which has a few thousand Russianised Tadjiks among its members, but is overwhelmingly Russian. What this man and his associates decide is law in the Tadjik mountains... in these circumstances how can sovereignty be said to signify anything? And in what way can the method of rule applied to it be thought of as anything but a variety of imperialism, of colonialism?³³

This passage is typical of the Western approach to the issue of Russian colonialism in Central Asia. Its purpose is to give the lie to the Soviet claim that the USSR was a voluntary association of sovereign states. The Soviet Union appears as a Russian Empire in which Russians impose their will on non-Russians. The passage itself however points to a more complex reality.

Although it is true that Krushev was not a Tadjik, he was not Russian but Ukrainian, although Armstrong pointed out that Krushev himself was apt to play this down.³⁴ Of the three Soviet leaders since the Revolution just one, Lenin, had been a Russian, a consideration which might suggest that the Soviet Union was more than simply a Russian Empire. If it was true that Tadjikistan was dictated to by a non-Tadjik, it could be argued that Russia was dictated to by a non-Russian. It was also admitted that Krushev ruled with the aid of 'associates,' including Tadjiks. Tadjik involvement in the governance of Tadjikistan is somehow discounted on the grounds that these people are 'Russianised,' that is to say that they are not 'true' Tadjiks. If Tadjiks who collaborate with the regime are 'not true' Tadjiks, the implication is that a 'true' Tadjik does not co-operate with Soviet power. If this were not the case it would not be possible to claim that Tadjiks had no part in the running of their country. For such co-operation to occur non-Russians must be de-naturalised. This is reminiscent of the philosophical trope of the 'No true Scotsman' argument.ⁱ

ⁱ Proposition: All Scots are alcoholic.

Refutation: This Scot is not alcoholic.

Counter: He is not a true Scot, since all Scots are alcoholic.

The presentation of Central Asia as a colony of Russia depended on two considerations, the political (including the economic) and the cultural. In practise until the end of the 1960s political issues tended primarily to concern commentators writing in English, whilst those writing in French concentrated on the cultural, the two strands becoming combined from the late 1960s with Islam, which had been seen as belonging to the cultural sphere, being awarded a political status. This is not a hard and fast division. Alexandre Bennigsen in his French writing on the 'National Communism' of Sultan Galiev made a valuable contribution to the political debate while the American Edward Allworth focused largely on cultural matters, particularly as reflected in Central Asian literature (it should be noted that one of Allworth's earliest contributions appeared in French and that Bennigsen's earliest presentation on Sultan Galiev was published in French just a year before its English translation). Some issues, notably that of language use, did not fall clearly into either camp.

2.iii:a) Political/Economic Imperialism

The primary political issue was that of how Russia exerted its authority over non-Russians. This brought attention to bear on the political structure of the Soviet Union and in particular to the Soviet claim to have 'solved' the nationalities problem. This problem was conceived in terms of race relations. Friction between the races was believed to be a consequence of the colonial dominance of one people over another of a different race or culture. Wheeler wrote,

Outside the Soviet Union racial problems and the tension resulting from them have for many decades been freely and often acrimoniously discussed wherever they arose, and the situation in some countries has been considerably eased by the grant of self-government to former colonial territories, sometimes willingly and sometimes under pressure. In the Soviet Union, which includes nearly half the total area of Asia, the authorities do not admit the existence of any racial tension or even of any racial problems.³⁵

Most commentators noted that racism *per se* was not ingrained in Russian culture. Wheeler noted that the Russian language even lacked a term of its own for the concept of race. The word *rasa* was a loan. Although Russians might have feelings of cultural superiority this was not translated into a racist ideology.

Kolarz observed that “neither official nor unofficial Russia knew any racial prejudice... Absence of racial pride and prejudice is thus for Russia not a revolutionary principle, but is the natural pre-requisite for the growth of the Russian Empire.”³⁶

Leprince-Ringuet claimed that racial prejudice was proscribed by law in the USSRⁱⁱ and observed that “certainly, Russia is tolerant of and by nature accommodating towards foreigners.”³⁷ In 1953 Farid Jafri, editor of Karachi’s *Civil and Military Gazette*, stated that Communism’s ideological opposition to racism coupled with the apparent absence of actual racism in the USSR was one of the principle reasons for the attractiveness of Communism to the victims of Western colonialism, who were alienated from the West because of the typically hostile and arrogant attitude of many Westerners to Asians.³⁸ In this he was supported by Frank Moraes of *The Indian Express* who maintained that the majority of Asians and Africans associated colonialism with the issue of skin colour and racism.³⁹ Moraes asserted that skin colour did not appear to be a factor in Soviet society. Rywkin, a Pole born in 1923 in Wilno (now Vilnius, Lithuania) who was exiled to Central Asia during the War before emigrating to the US, was consistently hostile to Soviet policy but admitted that “individual Russians were never granted the superior status which characterised the old European standing in Asian or African society.”⁴⁰

The issue was raised by Bennigsen and d’Encausse, who said of the Russians in Central Asia that they were not ‘classical colonisers’ since Communism preached a racial equality “born of a traditional Russian liberalism”⁴¹ contrasting with the strict ‘isolationist racism’ of other colonisers. Equality was enhanced by the doctrines of a culture ‘national in form and socialist in content’ and ‘proletarian internationalism.’ These would allow for “the mutual transformation of two peoples and two civilisations in the Communist stock pot,” an event affecting both peoples equally and seemingly denying the unbalanced dynamic of a colonial situation. This might have been the case in theory, but in practise Soviet policy

has never questioned the superiority of Russo-Western culture over the Muslim Irano-Turkic cultures of Central Asia. Despite the official doctrine, it is the

ⁱⁱ 1936 Constitution Art.123

Russian *minority*, with theoretically equal rights, which imposes its political and spiritual culture on the Muslim *majority*.⁴²

Despite the lack of institutional racism in the Soviet Union, there was one phenomenon which seemed typical of European colonial empires and obtained also in the southern United States which was replicated in Central Asia. This was a *de facto* social segregation along racial lines.

Wheeler, referring to an unnamed study by Richard Pipes, observed that intermarriage between Russians and Central Asians was extremely rare and that there was virtually no contact between the two groups in work, education or leisure. Effectively the two peoples led entirely separate, parallel, lives. This fact was commonly commented upon. Russians lived apart from natives in a way reminiscent of the 'cantonment' system. The traditional *mahalla* survived in Central Asian cities in parallel with a separate 'European' quarter which might effectively be a separate city, as Kagan or 'New Bokhara' was in relation to Bokhara (Kagan was not a Soviet foundation but dated from the Tsarist period as did many such 'European' quarters, a point which was rarely mentioned). Urban division was illustrated in an American study which published a plan of Tashkent showing the juxtaposition of a European-style city with wide straight avenues adjoining the original foundation with its narrow winding alleys, the two sectors designated in Russian 'native part' and 'European part'.⁴³ The plan dated from 1913 but it was obviously meant to be taken as symptomatic of the division between Russians and non-Russians.

In the southern Central Asian republics the European population was overwhelmingly urban, however even in Kazakhstan with its significant rural population of European origin physical separation still obtained. Individual farming communities tended to be ethnically homogenous as Russian, Kazakh, German or Korean, having little contact with one another.

It was possible for a Central Asian to live for long periods without coming into contact with a Russian at all, and in fact "in the great majority of cases the Muslim's first contact with the Russians comes in the Army."⁴⁴ Nove and Newth went even

further, asserting that "It is probable that many thousands of the native population will never come into contact with a Russian."⁴⁵

Physical separation did not necessarily reflect poorly on the Russians, being the personal choice of the Central Asians themselves.

This situation does not reflect any particular discredit on the Russians - the reluctance to intermingle is, indeed, on the native rather than the Russian side; nor does it indicate any particular distaste for Russian and Soviet civilisation. It is simply the result of a clash of differing civilisations in a typically colonial society.⁴⁶

Emphasis on physical separation allowed for the development of the impression, never explicitly stated, that Russians were extraneous to Central Asian society, appearing as an imposition from outside lacking any ties to the region itself. A parallel might be drawn between the position of the Russians in Central Asia and that of the British or the French in their colonies as people who controlled, but did not form a part of, an Asian society.

This arrangement of living space along ethnic lines may be typical of colonial situations, especially when it is enforced by government policy. However, none of the commentators who cited it as evidence of a fundamental incompatibility of the Russian with the indigenous populations characteristic of a colonial dynamic considered whether it was unique to colonies. Examination of any modern multi-ethnic city in the West reveals a high degree of spontaneous segregation, with divisions into 'Chinatown', 'Little Italy' and so on.

The division of rural communities along ethnic lines, rare in Western Europe, was until the Second World War common in Central and Eastern Europe and persists in parts of the Balkans and Romania. Historically it has been common for a rural community to be linguistically and in some cases religiously distinct from the urban population of multi-national empires of the type described by Kuhn as 'non-colonial'. In such situations feelings of superiority expressed by urban populations towards country people can take on a quasi-racist flavour as a secondary characteristic.

The fact that Russians in Central Asia were overwhelmingly urban whilst natives were preponderantly rural impacted on education and employment. It was noted that there was an effective ethnic stratification of labour, again a feature common to multi-ethnic societies. Russians tended to dominate skilled labouring positions and managerial posts whilst Central Asians were typically employed in unskilled labour, agriculture or traditional industries.

Ethnic stratification of labour was in part dictated by the pattern of migration from Russia into Central Asia. During the Tsarist period Russians had come as soldiers, administrators or in connexion with the new technologies imported for the benefit of the Tsarist regime, notably the railway and telegraph. Wheeler noted that unlike the British in India the Tsarist Russians made no attempt to raise the educational level of the Central Asians or to recruit a native clerical class, in part because

they feared Islam as a sinister and secret force, and the fact that it seemed to elude their control engendered a distrust of the subject races which coloured their whole system of administration.⁴⁷

As a result, despite the Bolsheviks' stated intent of granting national autonomy to the formerly subject peoples, they were effectively unable to do so since there was no indigenous cadre available to staff an administration. This remained in Russian hands, "for the sudden abdication of paramount power over backward peoples unprepared for independence may prove a worse evil than its imposition."⁴⁸ Russians were to be the motor for the modernisation of Central Asian society and politics along socialist lines. This modernisation therefore took on a Russian hue. Inclusion in the political elite for Central Asians, the Bolsheviks' stated goal, demanded a degree of acceptance of Russian norms, perpetuating the situation of Russian dominance.

The second wave of European immigration came during and immediately following the Second World War and was connected to economic changes affecting the USSR as a whole.

As the industrial heartland of Russia fell to or was threatened by the Nazis after 1941, essential industries were evacuated to a previously lightly industrialised Central

Asia. Lacking instructors and time to train a workforce for the relocated factories, the Soviet authorities moved the workers along with the plant. This gave the appearance of Central Asian industries, particularly those of greatest importance to the state such as defence, being in the hands not of Central Asians but of Russians. This appears to be an instance of colonialism - the resources of a country being managed and exploited not by natives but by immigrants.

It might though be asked in what way these industries were 'Central Asian.' They did not evolve out of any economic or social dynamic intrinsic to the region but appeared, fully formed, as if overnight. The fact of their being located in Central Asia was almost co-incidental. In the 1960s, when strong links were still assumed between industrial ownership and industrial location, non-native involvement in an industry would appear as colonialism, but in the age of multi-nationals with no allegiance to a particular locality this link is less clear. In a sense, Soviet heavy industry might be seen as a kind of 'multi-national' which answered to needs not tied to any one place.

With regards the dominance of Russian technical cadres in the non-Russian republics which was a feature of industrial re-location and which was regarded as symptomatic of Russian control of the republics, Nove and Newth devised a table indicating the percentage of 'experts', university graduates, of a given nationality within their own republic and their showing among the total number of 'experts' within that republic.

According to Nove's and Newth's model, the republics of what they termed the 'Soviet Middle East' including Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Transcaucasia could be grouped according to three types. Type A included only Armenia. Only 52% of graduates of Armenian origin from the republic stayed in Armenia, but these comprised 92% of the republican total of 'experts', creating a surplus for export elsewhere in the USSR. Type B included Georgia and Azerbaijan, in which most graduates remained in their own republic but there was still a need to import expertise. The Central Asian

republics formed Type C, which was heavily dependent on imported technicians.ⁱⁱⁱ Russian technical supervision appears as a matter of necessity not policy. This could be compared to a situation in which a developing country invests in plant from the West which in the absence of qualified locals is constructed and initially managed by expatriates.

Nove and Newth suggested that this situation could theoretically change, since

The shortage of manpower in the European part of the country is likely to become aggravated as time goes on, while it will be more plentiful in the East. It may well be that the present dependence of the latter on Europeans for technical supervision will disappear quite rapidly as specialists of local origin or second generation immigrants with local sympathies become available.⁴⁹

It became apparent during the 1970s and 1980s that such a personnel change was not occurring and that in addition trained Central Asians were not seeking employment outside the region, creating a local labour surplus. Rywkin⁵⁰ pointed to a 'demographic time-bomb' of a large, young, educated and economically frustrated population which would resent the Russians who held them back from positions of economic advancement.

Agricultural changes also served to give the impression that Central Asia was a colony. Opposition to agricultural change, especially the growth of the area under cotton, was taken as a primary example of anti-colonial sentiment. Specialisation in cotton as a cash crop at the expense of food production, which began long before the establishment of Soviet power, reduced Central Asia to a position of dependency on food imports from elsewhere in the USSR and had political and demographic consequences since the traditional food crop, rice, which like cotton requires abundant water, came to be replaced with grain grown in Kazakhstan under the Virgin Soil scheme. This brought a large number of European immigrants into the steppe vacated as a result of sedentarisation of the Kazakh nomads, agricultural collectivisation and concomitant famine (a process Caroe described as "genocide"⁵¹), and led to the

ⁱⁱⁱ 95% of Georgian and 91% of Azeri graduates remained, making up 79% and 60% of their respective republican totals. 95% of Kirghiz graduates stayed in Kirghizia. They comprised only 30% of the total number of 'experts'. Figures for other Central Asian republics were comparable.

creation of a Russian-speaking administrative Territory within Kazakhstan answerable to Moscow not Alma-Ata.

Nove and Newth insisted that this settlement followed an economic and agricultural imperative, and that agricultural specialisation was beneficial to the region. Climate and soil conditions favoured the cultivation of crops which could not be grown elsewhere and which commanded premium prices. They claimed rural incomes in Central Asia were higher than the all-Union average.

Oil was developed in Baku, and cotton was grown in Uzbekistan, not because of nationality policy but only because these were rather obvious ways of using the resource endowments of the areas concerned.⁵²

Regional agricultural variation can also be seen in the United States, where for instance Vermont is associated with dairy products, Virginia with cotton and tobacco and the Mid-West with grain. Specialisation could be reversed. When during the War Central Asia's supply of Ukrainian grain was cut off, the acreage under cotton declined. It could be argued that the Virgin Lands project, in establishing a source of food close to Central Asia, lessened that area's dependence on Europe.

Most commentators placed emphasis on the scheme's being carried out with European labour and imputed to this a political purpose having as its goal the retention of Russian control over the region. Rywkin claimed that European immigration was prompted more by "the possible desire to populate the area before the expected Chinese demographic explosion"⁵³ and fear of Chinese expansionism than any special desire to swamp Central Asia with Russians.

A decade earlier, Caroe estimated that "the degree of Russian infiltration already achieved should suffice to paralyse any Kazakh nationalist or separatist movement originating in Kazakhstan"⁵⁴...there is no question, anywhere in Turkistan, of the Russian being a sojourner only, as is the British administrator in Nigeria or the Sudan."⁵⁵ According to Conquest, migration had "weakened the national character of the Asian republics"⁵⁶ to the extent that any talk of autonomy or independence was meaningless.

Moraes by contrast suggested that Russification was not an aim of state-sponsored migration, arguing that “the Russians are more concerned with Communising their so-called autonomous republics... than they are with Russifying them.”⁵⁷ To most commentators there was no meaningful distinction to be made between the two.

Many analysts maintained that it was easy to preach racial equality in a situation where Russians outnumbered indigenous peoples. Caroe stated that “where there is no question of Russians being left a small minority it is easy to assert that all men have equal rights.”⁵⁸ In the same article in which Wheeler had noted the absence of a Russian word for ‘race’ he observed that Slavs collectively made up 80% of the Soviet Union’s population and 30% of Central Asia’s.

Stahl emphasised the size of the European, specifically Russian, population of the USSR. Of the 189 ethnic groups listed in the 1939 Soviet census, 179 collectively constituted just 9% of the population, with Russians alone comprising 58%.

The large preponderance of Europeans over Asiatics in the USSR as a whole makes the Communist solution to the racial question much simpler than it otherwise would be. Men of all races and colours throughout the Union can be made citizens with equal rights in all respects without the European population having to fear that they will be ousted and outnumbered.⁵⁹

Kolarz claimed that the European population of Kazakhstan exceeded that of the whole of Africa, including Algeria, Kenya and South Africa, while Rywkin gave relative percentages of Europeans in non-European areas as follows: Central Asia including Kazakhstan 25%; Kazakhstan itself 65%; South Africa 21%; Algeria 14%. Not only were there more Europeans in Central Asia than elsewhere, but Europeans outnumbered all indigenous Central Asian groups. “The large European population of Central Asia plays a decisive role in the political, cultural, and economic life of the area.”⁶⁰

The numerical dominance of Russians throughout the Union had a number of corollaries. According to Wheeler their sheer numbers made it impossible for a nationalist movement to develop.

The Soviet Union's ability to maintain military control over Central Asia was enhanced by the numerical superiority of Russians, although this military aspect did not receive as much attention as might perhaps have been expected. It was remembered that Bolshevik power in Central Asia had been established by a relatively small number of Russians. Wheeler observed that unlike the British or French Empires which required a locally recruited armed force to guarantee the security of overseas possessions, the Soviet Union maintained no force of 'colonial levies', preferring an integrated Union-wide army. This meant that in practice force of arms in Central Asia could remain the unique preserve of Russians, with non-Russian conscripts performing military service away from their homelands. The importance of this lay in Wheeler's assertion that an anti-colonial revolt depended on the pre-existence of a native standing army able to usurp the dominant power's monopoly on the use of force.

The fact that the Red Army in Central Asia was not composed primarily of Central Asians enabled some to present it as an army of occupation. At a meeting of the Royal Central Asian Society in London in 1960, Lord Cork characterised the Russian presence in Central Asia as one of "peaceful penetration with military backing."⁶¹ This Wheeler accepted while denying that Russian control was primarily military. Although Red Army units stationed in Central Asia were not manned by Central Asians and might appear as an army of occupation, they were in practice confined to barracks. This situation was said to be analogous to that obtaining in East Germany, where Soviet troops although present were not visible.

Conquest was more emphatic in regarding the Red Army as an imperialist army of occupation. As an example of the Soviet Union's hypocrisy in attacking the West as 'imperialist', he stated that in Soviet eyes "The retention by Britain of a small base in Cyprus is 'imperialism'. The stationing of a powerful army, the carrying out of H-bomb tests in Turkestan is not."⁶²

Such comparisons between the Red Army in Central Asia and East Germany and the British army in Cyprus are specious. To take Conquest's comparison first, it can be seen that the situations in Cyprus and Turkestan were different. Cyprus had gained

international recognition as an independent state in 1960 despite British opposition. Britain retained control of not one but two 'Sovereign Bases' in Cyprus covering ninety-nine square miles. Britain also retained the right to full control of the island's only civilian airport in the event of an emergency, which would be defined not in Nicosia but in London. The Turkish invasion of 1974, although an emergency for Cyprus, did not affect Britain, which did not act. In this context it is hardly surprising that a later scholar described Cypriot independence as no more than "theoretical."⁶³

'Turkestan' was not an independent state whose territory was occupied by the army of an outside power. It was an integral part of the Soviet Union. The Red Army was the army of the Soviet Union. In Central Asia it was not the army of an outside power. Its purpose was not the subjugation of Central Asians but their defence. Where else would the USSR station its troops or carry out nuclear arms testing, if not on its own territory?

Kolarz noted that the ancient word 'Turkestan' remained in use only as the name of a Soviet Military District. This he ascribed to the fact that "the Soviet Army does not want to discard that traditional name which recalls the colonial wars... against the Central Asian people and their rulers,"⁶⁴ a contention which although revealing of the West's attitude to the Red Army presence in Central Asia cannot go unchallenged. The claim is that the phrase 'Turkestan Military District' was a deliberate evocation by the Russian high command of the Imperial past, stressing the subordination of Central Asia. Although Kolarz himself usually used the word Turkestan to designate an actual past or potential future political unit, this is not the sense in which Soviet strategists used it. Soviet defence was organised along strategic not republican lines into eighteen Military Districts. Turkestan covered a distinct geographical and strategic entity independent of political divisions, as did the 'Western', 'Baltic', and 'Trans-Baikal' Military Districts. The Turkestan Military District included Kazakhstan, which in Soviet usage was not considered a part of Central Asia. It would seem that rather than being motivated by ideas of colonial/imperial aggrandisement, the use of the word Turkestan was sanctioned by practical considerations. Alternatives such as 'Southern' or 'Central

Asian' would be inaccurate, the former implying the inclusion of Transcaucasia, a District in its own right, and the latter the exclusion of Kazakhstan.^{iv}

This consideration of Central Asia as not being a foreign country from the Soviet perspective also reflects on the East German comparison. East Germany was not a part of the Soviet Union, and here the Red Army could be seen as an army of occupation. Unlike the British Army of the Rhine whose original political role had disappeared leaving only a defensive capacity, there could be no doubt that the Red Army would if necessary remind eastern European governments of their duty to the international proletariat, as it did in Germany, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The Red Army here represented a veiled threat of the use of force to ensure political conformity. To compare its presence in East Germany with its presence in Central Asia is to imply that its role in the two places was the same. The army appears as an oppressor ensuring a political quiescence which otherwise might not obtain.

Had it been the case that Soviet rule in Central Asia was simply a matter of force backed by immigration, Bennigsen's contention that "Soviet Russia continues Imperial Russia,"⁶⁵ with its implied warning to recently decolonised countries not to have dealings with the Russians, would have been justified.

The Soviets claimed to have 'solved' the nationalities question and brought about an end to colonialism through the policy of 'National Delimitation' which from 1924 divided the Soviet Union into ethnically based federal territories with varying degrees of autonomy. "The proved existence of a national entity has as its corollary the right of that national entity to territorial autonomy and to cultural and political development."⁶⁶

The 'highest' units in terms of autonomy, the Union Republics (SSR), were supposedly sovereign entities which ran their own affairs and were joined in voluntary union, retaining the right of succession. Western scholars devoted much energy to giving the lie to this claim, arguing that Soviet federalism was in fact no more than a

^{iv} In 1969 the southern republics of Central Asia were constituted into a new Military District independent of Kazakhstan called the Central Asian Military District.

charade, that "Soviet nationalities policy appears simply as a new and materially more effective form of colonialism."⁶⁷

The Soviet political system itself was seldom addressed by Central Asia experts despite an abundance of literature on the subject, as previously the question of what constituted colonialism had been ignored. No author however could ignore the fact that Central Asia, with the USSR as a whole, was divided into republics which bore the names of differing ethnic groups and which were alleged to be the autonomous 'homelands' of those groups. This division had somehow to be explained. As with much else in the study of Central Asia, the debate was obscured by political considerations. Wheeler warned,

The essential features of the nationality policy have been obscured by propaganda - Soviet propaganda extolling it as a great and enlightened act of justice to the subject peoples of Imperial Russia, and anti-Soviet propaganda condemning it as a new and monstrous instrument of human enslavement. It is also possible to look at it as a hard-headed administrative expedient devised to meet certain unforeseen developments which followed the collapse of the Tsarist regime.⁶⁸

In Wheeler's estimation Lenin genuinely supported the idea of Central Asian self-determination but was persuaded not to pursue this course by a number of factors including Russia's need for raw materials, the presence of colonists who regarded the area as an integral part of Russia, and fear of British and Japanese intentions. Most importantly it was necessary for the survival of the Revolution to halt the centrifugal tendency of peripheral groups such as the Finns and Poles, a tendency being expressed in Muslim terms by Sultan Galiev.

Some people... maintain that the 'plan of dividing Turkestan into tribal states', that is, the territorial redistribution of 1924, was the direct result of Sultan Galiev's attempted 'counter revolution'.⁶⁹

Wheeler considered that the National Delimitation was in large measure dictated by necessity. As he noted, according to Marxist theory nationalism and the demand for national self-determination were symptomatic of the period of developed Capitalism which would be superseded by the evolution of material equality under Socialism, obviating nationalist prejudices. The creation of nation-states or simulacra

of nation-states was a necessary staging post on the path to Communism, under which the common demands of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie would overcome national sentiment.

It was believed that once material inequality had been eliminated, all bourgeois nationalist and separatist tendencies would disappear. Some writers maintain that this policy [of National Delimitation] was 'conceived in honesty';^v be that as it may, it quickly encountered realities which showed that it could not be made to correspond to the will of the people, however much it might contribute to their material good.⁷⁰

Wheeler was sympathetic to the aims of the National Delimitation, however he was doubtful about its viability in the long term as a means of ensuring continued Central Asian membership of the Union.

As a temporary political expedient, [Soviet nationality policy] could, indeed, be seen as the best one in the circumstances... Whether the Soviet nationalities policy can be said to constitute a permanent and ethical solution of the colonial problem and whether it has been applied with due regard to the will or spiritual requirements of the peoples concerned are entirely different but no less important questions.⁷¹

...if the Soviet government had ever entertained any idea of granting the peoples of Central Asia *genuine* independence based on ethnic and linguistic grouping, the national delimitation would have proved a useful interim measure.⁷²

[National Delimitation was] not only an important administrative expedient for the restoration of law and order out of chaos, but it served as a spectacular renunciation of the whole imperial principle and by creating a whole new set of administrative terms strove to give the impression that colonialism had disappeared forever.⁷³

In most cases Soviet federalism was interpreted as a policy of *divide et imperia*. Wheeler, whilst recognising some justification for this view, denied that the policy was entirely cynical. The republics were not seen as an attempt to meet the national aspirations of Central Asian peoples but as a means by which Russian control might be perpetuated. Despite having read Stalin's *Marxism and the National Colonial Question*, Hostler, US Military Attaché in Ankara before joining Air Force Headquarters in Washington DC, ignored the ideological justification for the division of Central Asia, stating that "the creation of individual republics is aimed at the

^v This phrase was borrowed, uncredited, from Parks' *Bolshevism in Turkestan 1917-1927*

disintegration of the Turkish area and promoting local anti-pan-Turkist areas,”⁷⁴ pan-Turkism being seen by Hostler as the single greatest threat to Communist (Russian) hegemony. This idea of the arbitrary division of Central Asia was one commonly held by émigré groups in Turkey and Germany.

Kolarz used this theory of divide and rule to contrast Soviet with British policy and to highlight the hypocrisy of Soviet claims to have ended colonialism, although Monteil did not consider that such a comparison could legitimately be made: “British rule was characterised as haphazard, pragmatic and flexible, the very opposite of Soviet ideological inflexibility... one cannot usefully compare Soviet ‘methods’ with what is, precisely and by definition, the ‘absence of method’.”⁷⁵

According to Kolarz, British colonialism was only ever intended to be temporary. He contended that having created modern states in Africa and Asia the British left willingly.

Not even the most radical Gold Coast nationalist would assert that the British delayed the liquidation of colonial rule in his country, or that they yielded to violence. In fact the British did everything to facilitate the transition of the country from colonial status to fully-fledged nationhood.⁷⁶

Historically speaking, the British came to Nigeria first as rulers and at a later stage they became advisors and helpers. Once their task was completed they left.⁷⁷

In their rule over Nigeria the British had succeeded in uniting “a country which was torn by deep cultural cleavages and tribal conflicts, but which nevertheless forms a viable geographical and political entity.”⁷⁸ The Russians had destroyed the unity of Turkestan in order to consolidate their own power. This could be seen both within the USSR itself and in the division of the Kazakhs between the Kazakh SSR and the Kazakh Autonomous Uyezd within the People’s Republic of China. The logic of national self-determination which the Delimitation supposedly guaranteed would seem to demand the union of all Kazakhs within a single state. In practise the Soviet and Chinese governments were striving to make such a union impossible, introducing different alphabets in each territory to hinder communication. The Communists called for the unification of the two Koreas, Vietnams, Cameroons and Somalias,

Inside the Communist bloc, however, things are quite different. [Kazakh] national unity is made impossible by Russia's and China's conflicting power interests.⁷⁹

Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejart further illustrated the divisive effect of Soviet policy when they observed that in place of the three literary languages used by the Muslims of the Russian Empire before 1917 there were now twenty-eight. In Daghestan alone the pre-Revolutionary *lingua franca*, Arabic, had by 1945 been replaced by nine official languages in addition to Russian, with obvious implication for the possibility of the kind of pan-Muslim bloc against the Russians which seemed to have been developing in the early years of the century.

The seeming arbitrariness of the internal borders of the USSR formed an important part of the argument that the national delimitation was symptomatic of colonialism. The constituent nations of the USSR had not evolved as Western nations had, but had been devised by central planners.

To Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejart, a more 'natural' division of Central Asia would have been into three parts as its peoples were developing into "nations in the making"

the Kazakh-Kirghiz group, the Uzbek-Tadjik group and the Turkmen group. Under the Soviet regime this natural process was given a further impetus, because the authorities favoured the consolidation not of three but of six Socialist nations (five Turkish and one Iranian) and of two stable *narodnost'*, the latter provided with literary languages but not with territory.⁸⁰

Soviet federalism served to further the aims of the central government rather than to meet the aspirations of the diverse nationalities. Conquest noted that

Communist theory regards... nations as 'particles' to be sacrificed for the good of the whole. The 'whole' is represented by the large Communist state: and in its interests any small nationality must, if necessary, be sacrificed.⁸¹

The function of federalism as a tool of Muscovite rule could be illustrated in a number of ways such as the deportation of nations and the destruction of their

administrative units, and the 'demotion' of Karelia from Union to Autonomous Republic. As Kolarz observed,

An entire nation may play a so-called reactionary role, that is, a role harmful to the interests of the proletariat, its Party and its state, the USSR... from this it follows that no racial group in the Soviet Union can enjoy any rights automatically and perpetually, but only as long as their rights do not conflict with the interests of the Soviet state.⁸²

Union Republics and other national-territorial units served not the interests of the minority peoples but those of the Russian-dominated State. This could be further seen in the administration of the federal system.

Although the Nationalities Policy as originally conceived had aimed at giving minorities territories in which they controlled the levers of power, in practise this was not the situation. Russia maintained a rigid control over Central Asia through the state structure.

On the federal level, the government of the USSR comprised a tripartite legislature. The lower house, the Soviet of the Union, was elected from constituency lists, delegates representing areas roughly equal in population. The upper house, the Soviet of Nationalities, comprised fixed numbers of deputies from each Union and Autonomous Republic in order to guarantee minority participation in government. Ukraine, a Union Republic, sent the same number of deputies (25) as the much smaller Estonia and fewer than Uzbekistan, which sent twenty-five as a Union Republic and eleven from the Autonomous Republic within its borders. These two assemblies comprised the Supreme Soviet and in fact met rarely. The day-to-day operation of the government was in the hands of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet elected by the two houses, an 'inner sanctum' comprising a chairman, the Presidents of each Union Republic and fifteen other members.

Below federal level republics had their own state structure, government and ministries. According to Rywkin, whose PhD thesis *The Soviet Nationality Policy and the Communist Party Structure in Uzbekistan 1941-1946* formed the basis for his later work *Russia in Central Asia*, Lenin demanded federal control only over defence and

foreign affairs, the republics being autonomous in all other areas. The 1936 Constitution accorded republican authority only over education, social security and the local economy with all other areas of government reserved for all-Union organs.

Although delegates to the Soviets were elected, formally making the country a participatory democracy, the system had its limits. Hayit stated that elections were entirely controlled by the NKVD and as far as republican government went “The parliaments of the five Turkestani republics are in session once a year for two or three days; their sittings would be solely composed of Communists...”⁸³

Power lay not in the parliaments established under the Constitution but in the Communist Party, which existed as an all-Union body guiding political decisions throughout the state rather than being divided into ‘republican’ parties. This allowed for the dominance of Russians and the promotion of Russian interests at the expense of those of other nationalities, since the dominance of Russians in the country as a whole was reflected in the membership of the Party which effectively formed the true government of the USSR, organs of state like the Soviets being little more than executors of the Party’s will.

The result of this was that Soviet self-government in the republics was a myth. Republican leaderships were not sovereign but subordinate to the decisions of the Moscow-centred, Russian-dominated Party. This was highlighted by Conquest who observed the seeming conflict between the needs of a federal state structure and those of a centralised Party which had the power to overrule the decisions of local administrators.

What is most striking is the fact that all decisions, whether more or less ‘liberal’ from year to year, are taken in Moscow. It is in the Central Committee of the Communist Party, and its agencies, that the rules of language, of culture and of history are laid down for the Asian populations.⁸⁴

There was an important sense in which Central Asians were not masters of their own homes but victims of a colonial dynamic. Bennigsen observed that “the instruments of power... [are] dominated by Russians.”⁸⁵ Nove and Newth focused on

the role of the Communist Party arguing "As so few Central Asians are in a position to influence the decisions of Moscow, there is an important sense in which they are subject to alien rule."⁸⁶

Seton-Watson, Professor of Russian History at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London, also argued that the role of the Communist Party ensured that Central Asia remained a colony. Although Russian supremacy was not an ideological target of the Party, the ethnic make-up of the USSR resulted in a situation in which government was carried out principally by and for Russians.

Central Asians have remained colonial subjects, with no right of self-determination, and they have been ruled by the same Communist Party as the Russians and the European subject peoples of the Soviet Union. But has this rule been exercised in the name of the Russian people or someone else? The answer must be that power has been wielded by a totalitarian state based not on nationalist but on Communist principles, but that there are also definite elements of Russification, which suggest some continuity with Imperial Russia... the domination of the Russians over [Central Asia] is a foreign domination, which certainly has its good features but remains foreign.⁸⁷

In Kolarz's estimation the role of the Communist Party "renders all national autonomy fictitious."⁸⁸ This could be seen in the events in Kazakhstan in 1954 when Zhumbay Shayakhmetov, the First Secretary of eight years' standing, was dismissed and replaced by two 'Russians,' Panteleimon Ponomarenko and Leonid Brezhnev, which appeared to call into question who it was who actually ruled Kazakhstan, Kazakhs or Russians.

High officials of the USSR would still be posted at a few days', perhaps hours', notice to the capital of a non-Russian Soviet Republic where they at once took command of the entire economic and political life... Kazakhstan had to accept its new rulers without demur.⁸⁹

The appointment of Europeans to high office in Kazakhstan Kolarz compared to that of Walter Bertsch as Nazi Governor of Bohemia-Moravia. This event forced the nominally independent Czech government to transact business in German rather than Czech, as the Kazakh government was now forced to use Russian. The idea of a 'power behind the throne' in Central Asia was repeated throughout discussions of Soviet government. It was stressed that although formal leadership of republican

governmental departments might be in the hands of a native, his deputy was invariably a Russian who was able to exert control over the organs of state. As Rywkin wrote, "Moscow has taken no chances... native Muslim ministers have had little chance to escape Russian control."⁹⁰ Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay noted that "the distribution of positions in the republican Councils of Ministers obeys tacit rules, having the goal of giving the nations apparent authority whilst leaving certain key positions to Russians and other Europeans."⁹¹ Russian 'shadows' existed at all levels of government beyond the village. They gave administrative assistance and ensured political conformity. As a result of this arrangement, Conquest felt able to write

The pattern that appears is of a great centralised empire, in which a few concessions are made to local feeling, but none which grant any of the substance of national self-determination.⁹²

If Soviet federalism was no more than a charade covering Russian imperial control of Central Asia, what was its point? Two views were presented. Wheeler introduced the concept of the 'homeopathic' treatment of nationalism by making limited concessions as a sop to local aspirations whilst allowing the Imperial power to retain control. As Nove and Newth observed, the lack of local means of political expression was one of the factors behind the Algerian revolt. Leprince-Ringuet listed "the granting of a degree of autonomy to the different small Muslim republics"⁹³ as among the reasons for the maintenance of Soviet control, and Monteil asked "if there is value in the Soviet experience, could it not be reached by other means [than force]?"⁹⁴

It was this 'homeopathic' treatment, meeting the challenge of nationalism by making easy concessions, that led Wheeler to characterise Soviet rule as "a new and materially more efficient form of colonialism." "By comparison with the independence enjoyed by such former colonial territories as Morocco, Ghana, India, Pakistan and Burma, the 'full sovereignty' claimed for the Soviet Muslim republics is a myth."⁹⁵ Wheeler compared the status of the Central Asian republics to that of the Princely States in British India, technically independent but effectively controlled by the Political Resident and unable to act without the permission of the British authorities. The

National Delimitation served to give the impression that the colonial era had passed although its dynamic persisted.

[Uzbeks] might have their national flag, their national language and some (but not all) of their national cultural traditions; but there was no question of their being Uzbek citizens or Uzbek patriots; their patriotism, their military service, their work and their productivity were due to the Soviet State as a whole.⁹⁶

This passage brings us as close as any to what Wheeler understood by colonialism. It appears to lie in the Uzbeks, taking the above example, owing allegiance to a state other than their 'own'. The Uzbeks' state is presented not as being the Soviet Union but as only a small part of it.

This assumption required a focus on Central Asia to the exclusion of the rest of the USSR, which was conceived of not as a unitary state but as a single country, Russia, imposing its will on subject nations. Wheeler compared the USSR to Imperial British India not to other constitutionally federal states. To have done so would have been immediately to weaken the charge of colonialism. If in the above extract we substitute 'Quebecois' for 'Uzbek' and 'Canada' for 'Soviet' the passage is no less true.

Aside from the 'homeopathic' treatment of nationalism, Soviet federalism was said to have another function, propaganda. The theoretical constitutional independence of the republics was no more than a sham aimed at impressing foreign visitors. It served to present the Soviet Union in a favourable light to the independent states of Africa and Asia, showing that the USSR was the enemy of colonialism and therefore their friend. This was an essential consideration if the project of exporting Communism was to proceed and remain Moscow-led. It depended on "the gullibility of foreign guests and the ignorance prevailing in so many parts of the world as to the conditions of the non-Russian republics of the Soviet Union."⁹⁷

As Kolarz, who was the most consistent and coherent exponent of the theory that the national republics served a primarily propaganda purpose, had it,

the Kremlin sees itself compelled to push Asian communists into the foreground not only to persuade the former colonial peoples that the colonial question in the Soviet Union has been solved, but also to counteract the competition. It wishes to combat a widespread attitude which could be epitomised in the sentence 'Russia means Europe whilst China means Asia.'⁹⁸

Propagandising was effected by means of what Kolarz dubbed the 'Potemkin Visit,' after the 'Potemkin Villages' of Catherine II's reign. One such was Nasser's 1958 visit to Tashkent.

Nasser was accompanied by N.A. Mukhitdinov, a Central Asian Secretary to the Soviet Communist Party. At a mass rally in his honour the Egyptian President was introduced to Uzbek President Sharif Rashidov, Mufti Ziauddin Babakhanov, Khamrakul Tursunkulov, and a Ukrainian factory hand called Serezhenko. The intention was to show Central Asians as masters of their own home, but "by meeting both Tursunkulov and Mufti Babakhanov, President Nasser was made the victim of a particularly studied piece of deceit."⁹⁹

The deceit comprised a number of things - that the Presidency of Uzbekistan was comparable to that of Egypt when Rashidov could only fulfil Moscow's orders (which as a member Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet he helped formulate. Kolarz ignored this); the subordinate position of the only European present; the presence of the Mufti, giving the impression that Islam was held in greater respect than was the case; and finally the position of Tursunkulov. Kolarz maintained he was not the head of a collective farm, as claimed, but a member of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet, surely a far more impressive achievement for a 'colonial.' If the aim of the visit had been to show Central Asians to be their own masters it is hard to see wherein lies the 'deceit.' Of the four named Central Asians, three held positions of the highest authority both within their own republic and over the whole USSR.

The 'deceit' could only be made real either by claiming that these men were not 'true' Central Asians or by denying that they had actual political power. Seton-Watson observed the great changes which had taken place since the Revolution but denied that Central Asians had had any part in formulating or implementing them: "These great

changes have been planned and executed on orders from above. The Central Asians have never had the slightest influence on policy.”¹⁰⁰ Conquest stated, “it is hard to believe that constitutional provisions of so derisory a nature could really impress foreign observers with the ideas that a non-colonialist method of rule was involved.”¹⁰¹

2.iii:b) Cultural Imperialism

“The importance of Russian physical... penetration should not, however, overshadow the importance of the process of cultural assimilation.”¹⁰² Imperialism was not merely a matter of political dominance. Certain imperialisms demanded not only the political subjugation of conquered peoples but their cultural subjugation. Such, it was argued, was the aim of Soviet rule in Central Asia. Cultural subjugation was a strong feature of French colonial policy, which had sought to replace indigenous cultures with a conception of ‘Frenchness.’ In the twenty years after the Second World War a colony was conceived of as a polity in which members of one cultural or ‘ethnic’^{vi} group held political power over another. Such a situation was perceived as being untenable. Decolonisation was inevitable, and it could take one of two forms, as explained by Stahl.¹⁰³ Either the imperial power could withdraw, granting home rule to the colony, or the colony could become assimilated into the dominant power. In the latter case, neither the formerly colonised nor the former colonialist perceives any dichotomy between ‘ruler’ and ‘ruled’. The two have merged and a colonial dynamic no longer subsists. As Stahl put it,

both Britain and the USSR are ‘decolonising’ Powers in the sense that they do not seek to keep their colonial peoples in subjugation. Britain aims at teaching her colonies to stand on their own two feet and govern themselves, while the USSR aims at bringing her peoples in Central Asia up to the level of those in the more politically advanced Republics in European Russia.¹⁰⁴

The term ‘cultural imperialism’ is in many ways unsatisfactory. If political imperialism can be defined as “the enforced rule of one people by another,” ‘cultural imperialism’ of the kind suggested by Stahl is a more complex issue. The term is itself of more recent coinage, not used during the colonialist and immediately post-colonialist era. Like the word ‘colonialism’ it is to a certain extent a term of

opprobrium used in the 1990s to argue that the imperialist dynamic does not necessarily lapse with the ending of political control but continues in the cultural sphere. The term refers to the dominance of one culture by another from outside. Cultural imperialism renders an indigenous culture less 'authentic' by introducing elements which result in that culture becoming more like the external influence and less like 'itself'. The difficulty with the term 'cultural imperialism' lies in that it can exist independently of political and economic control. This suggests that there must be a degree of complicity on the part of its 'victims'. They must want for whatever reason - prestige, conceptions of what is 'modern', fashion, utility - to adopt the foreign culture.

Another problem with the concept of cultural imperialism is the question of what is meant by 'culture.' The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the word's primary meaning in the verbal sense of 'to grow' and only secondarily as a "particular form stage or type of intellectual development or civilization," a purposely vague definition which does not address what culture actually consists of. This vagueness about the meaning of the word can be seen by the fact that in the nineteenth century it meant primarily 'high' or elite culture: literature, classical music, drama, the visual arts. The illiterate within society were, with non-literate societies as a whole, described as 'uncultured'. At the end of the twentieth century it is impossible to think in such terms. 'Culture' has come to denote the means of understanding and expressing one's own group identity. Any form of group behaviour is understood as a culture, whence such concepts as 'youth culture.' The particular features which distinguish one culture from another remain however largely undefined.

Wheeler offered three definitions of culture.¹⁰⁵ He stated that according to Ginsburg, culture was "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, law, custom, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." McIver had it that "culture is what we are, civilization is what we use," taking culture as "the expression of our nature in our mode of living and of thinking" and civilization as "the apparatus for the control of the conditions of life and of social order." In the

^{vi} The terms were at the time not distinguished unless 'ethnic' was being used in the sense of 'racial'.

Soviet conception culture was “the combination of the material and spiritual values created and developed by humanity in the course of its history.” According to Soviet theory Socialism represented not only the most perfect economic order short of Communism but also the highest cultural form. Elsewhere Wheeler stated that

The Russians do not generally distinguish between culture and civilisation, and Soviet sociologists would not accept Prof. McIver’s statement that “our culture is what we are, our civilisation is what we use.” But on the basis of such a distinction it can be said that whereas the use of Soviet *civilization* is now widespread in Muslim Central Asia and may even be firmly established there, the adoption of Soviet *culture* is still limited and superficial.¹⁰⁶

This de-coupling of culture from civilization was a feature of Western writing. Although Bacon included technological change in her description of Central Asian culture, noting for instance the replacement of the horse with the bicycle as a means of transport as an example of cultural change, most authorities did not consider technology (‘what we use’) as an aspect of culture, preferring to focus on questions of self-perception as expressed in such fields as language and literature. The one exception was that of family life and social structure, which in McIver’s thesis belongs in the realm of civilization (‘apparatus for control of social order’).

The questions of whether ‘culture’ can be meaningfully separated from ‘civilization’, whether one is an expression of the other and in what either actually consists are not purely philosophical. If the two are linked, then a change in the one will generate a change in the other. If one’s ‘civilization’ - technology, political institutions - becomes ‘modern’, then assuming a linkage between ‘civilization’ and ‘culture’ one’s culture will also become modern. If ‘modernisation’ means ‘Europeanisation’, as it was largely understood by the scholars under discussion, then in certain respects one’s culture will become more ‘European’. Cultural change on this reading becomes not a measure of imperialism but of modernisation. This is an argument employed by Nove and Newth when they suggested that the changes which had occurred in Central Asia such as the growth of the power of the state at the expense of traditional groupings and realignments in family relations were not symptomatic of Russian imperialism but of modernisation, and were changes which had come about throughout the Muslim world.

Some critics have made much of the destruction of the traditional Muslim way of life. Such a destruction has indeed occurred, but it is at least arguable that this is part of the price that one has to pay, inside and outside Soviet borders, for modernisation and development. One has only to examine the policy of Atatürk.¹⁰⁷

This position was in large part accepted. Wheeler however noted that there was a crucial difference between cultural change in Soviet Central Asia and ostensibly similar phenomena affecting the rest of the Muslim world. This was that whereas elsewhere Westernisation had been to a large extent spontaneously generated, in the case of Central Asia it was the result of deliberate government policy backed with the force of law.

Russianisation is of course merely one form of the Westernisation which in varying degrees has affected all the Muslim countries of Asia. The difference is that except in isolated cases such as dress and language reforms in Turkey, no government of an Asian Muslim country whether nationalist or imperialist has ever proposed to enforce the introduction of Western culture by means of legislation.^{108vii}

The political and ideological structure of the USSR meant that cultural change was formulated, initiated and legislated for in the Russian-dominated environment of Moscow. Thus it could be described as 'imperialist'. It was Russians not Central Asians who prescribed the nature of 'who we are' in Central Asia.

The influence specifically of Russian culture on Central Asia and the changes in Central Asian culture during the Soviet period were discussed as being symptomatic of the imperialist control of Russia over the area and were interpreted as being part of a deliberate plan to perpetuate that control. This understanding was reinforced by the fact that certain cultural changes which tended towards Russification were the result of deliberate state policy. Bacon observed other changes, such as the habit of the Kazakhs of eating flat *naan* bread rather than the Russian leavened bread which had

^{vii} Wheeler's contention that Westernisation was uniquely enforced by law in the USSR is not strictly true. Afghanistan, Albania and Iran also experienced enforced accelerated Westernisation. See e.g. Banuazizi & Weiner (1986), Owen (1992), Jelavich (1983).

been introduced at the same time,^{viii} which had not been condoned by state policy and which were of Central Asian origin. These were seen as being more acceptable to Central Asians than habits enjoined by the Moscow-based government. The purpose of state policy was the transformation by force if necessary of the cultures of all the peoples of the USSR as a part of the project of building Communism.

The concerns of Western scholars were focused not so much on the extent to which Central Asian culture had changed, although this had been a primary purpose of Bacon's work, as the extent to which it had become Russian, why it had become Russian and whether Russification was spontaneous or politically motivated. This was of particular importance to French scholars, since the French imperial project was justified by a 'mission civilatrice' which sought to replace indigenous cultures with that of France, the success or failure of French rule being gauged by the extent to which this had occurred.¹⁰⁹

Although it had been observed that the Russians did not evince conceptions of racial superiority, Wheeler noted a tendency towards a belief in Russian cultural superiority. This derived in part from Russia's history of self-definition against (particularly) Islam and an eastern expansion which brought Russia into contact with the 'primitive' peoples of Siberia and was reinforced by the official adoption of a Marxist, neo-Darwinian, theory of history which perceived social dynamics in evolutionary terms. The Russians as initiators of the Socialist revolution and the first to begin constructing Communism were in this scheme more 'advanced' than other peoples, particularly the Muslims whose societies on the eve of the Revolution were variously described as being still at the 'feudal' stage or just entering into capitalism. Russian culture was therefore more advanced than other cultures of the USSR. Whilst that culture was itself being transformed others had to 'catch up' with a Russian paradigm. Communist culture was essentially Russian. "The declared goal is a culture which is national in form but socialist in content. Since however the driving force

^{viii} Bacon does not address what the Kazakhs had traditionally eaten. Small amounts of grain had been grown and more traded for by the Kazakhs before the arrival of the Russians. This was presumably transformed into some kind of bread.

behind the revolution was and is Russian... russianisation seems inevitable.”¹¹⁰ “The ultimate Soviet goal was Russianization.”¹¹¹

In effect the Soviet authorities have not been able - or have not wanted... to adapt Communism to the specific characteristics of each nationality (as Lenin nevertheless achieved in Russia or Mao Tse Tung for China). By an amazing paradox, the Soviets who are so liberal in racial matters evince an intransigent chauvinism as soon as their culture is concerned; this chauvinism is especially manifest in their relations with Muslim society.¹¹²

The ‘elder brother’ theory of relations between nations in which Russia appeared as mentor to less advanced societies was developed in order to ensure Russian hegemony. Western scholars noted that this theory, denigrating native cultures, was typical of an imperialist world-view. Kolarz observed that “it was customary in the United States to refer to the Filipinos as ‘little brown brothers’.”¹¹³ The Dutch used the same formula in relation to the Indonesians.

Even before the Revolution the conception of Russians as elder brother to the subject nationalities and of the dominant position this accorded them had been expressed by Kuropatkin, then Governor-General of Turkestan, when in 1916 he claimed

To the Russian must belong the foremost role in all corners of Russia since they contributed more than all the others... The many peoples inhabiting Russia are all children of one father, the Great Sovereign Emperor. All of these many peoples are children of one mother, Great Russia. But in this numerous family the Russians must be the elder brothers of all the rest.¹¹⁴

Soviet cultural policies had undergone various changes since the Revolution. In the early years a policy of *korenizatsiya*, or ‘nativisation’ had sought to strengthen native cultures by such means as creating literary vernaculars. After the purges of the late 1930s this was replaced with the doctrine of *sblizheniye*, the ‘coming together’ of peoples, a formulation which, if it means anything, appears to imply the existence of a single ‘macro-culture’ allowing for slight regional variations. This formulation was itself replaced by *sliyaniye*, the ‘fusion’ of peoples into a new cultural formation, that of ‘Soviet culture’ under which conditions national distinctions would vanish altogether. These seemingly contradictory policies form parts of a single whole,

intended to force the 'backwards' peoples through the preliminary stages before the establishment of Communism by creating and then disbanding nation states as a precursor to the ending of class and all other distinctions under Communism.

To establish Communism it is... above all necessary to achieve a true cultural symbiosis of all the peoples of the Union by attacking the barriers which separate the Muslims from other human groupings and most especially the Russian people, the 'elder brother' of the great Soviet family.¹¹⁵

Cultural change took many forms, as culture itself has many expressions. Although taking cognisance of many of these, Western scholars focused on aspects of cultural change which tended towards the de-racination of Central Asians and their assimilation into the Russian whole which was the ultimate goal of Soviet policy. Thus while it was noted that new forms of cultural expression such as cinema had appeared these were not dwelt upon since they did not of themselves indicate the destruction of Central Asian culture which was said to be taking place.

Three specific aspects of culture dominated Western discussions. Religion was one. The Western interpretation of the role of Islam forms the bulk of this thesis, but the attack on Islam was not of itself evidence of forced Russification since all religions were under assault. Of greater interest in this context were the changes - or lack thereof - occurring to the languages and social organisation of Central Asia. I shall concentrate on language issues, since these attracted particular attention in the West as symptomatic of Russian cultural imperialism.

According to Bacon,

It has been written that 'every language reflects, and is in some of its features linked up with, the culture of the people speaking it, and is likely to undergo changes in these particular features in accordance with changes in the culture of the people.' A consideration of what has happened to the languages of Central Asia may thus give a clue to the degree and kind of change in other aspects of culture.¹¹⁶

Bennigsen and d'Encausse maintained that "in Central Asia culture and language are closely connected: they are two elements of the nationalism [by which they seem to have meant 'national identity' rather than a political project] of the Muslim peoples.

What would become of that nationalism if it were deprived of its principle means of expression?"¹¹⁷ evincing the typically French view that language was the bearer of national identity. British scholars were more prepared to accept that language loss did not entail de-racination. Nove and Newth pointed out that Irish nationalism and the Irish language were most vigorously promoted by those who spoke only English. Nevertheless, Wheeler considered that "the Soviet regime regards linguistic regimentation as one of the most important instruments in the moulding of the new society."¹¹⁸ Allworth noted that this was a result of Stalin's theory of the nation which insisted that for a people to count as such it must possess its own language. "Stalin and his colleagues long insisted on the fact that the spoken language was an essential criterion of nationality."¹¹⁹ Retention of a 'pure' native language could be interpreted as evidence for the preservation of an equally pristine culture.

Two aspects of linguistic development in the Soviet Union could be discerned. The first was the establishment and enforcement of standardised vernaculars and their extension into the literary sphere. This had an obvious practical use. The growth of a universal education system demanded a standardised language as it had elsewhere in the world where the establishment of schools was paralleled by growing intolerance of regional speech patterns. The use of national languages in administration and print demanded that these be reduced to writing. Most Western scholars however saw a political rather than a purely practical intent to these changes.

Standardising languages accentuated the differentiation between ethnic groups. There was no longer a gradual dialectal shift from one language to another but an abrupt change marked by republican boundaries. It was argued that the choice of language and dialect was politically motivated, as was shown by the change in 1937 from the vowel-harmonising Yasi dialect of Uzbek as the official form to that of Tashkent which had, uniquely for a Turkic language, lost this feature. It could be countered that the dialect of the republic's administrative centre was a more 'natural' choice than that of a town in a neighbouring republic.

The enforcement of vernaculars each possessing its own orthography as literary media in place of the written languages of Arabic, Persian and Chaghatay traditionally

used across the region served to split what could be presented as a broadly homogenous bloc into disparate elements which could no longer communicate with one another or act as a single unit against the Russians. "These aims if achieved would have the effect of preventing the formation of a single Turkic literary language which might aid the creation of a united Turkic and Muslim national movement."¹²⁰

Linguistic change on this level could be presented as another aspect of the policy of 'divide and rule', an interpretation followed by virtually all Western scholars, enhanced by Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay's belief that the speech patterns of Central Asia would 'naturally' have consolidated into three languages rather than the eight endorsed by the Soviets.

The second aspect of language change was Russification. This took two forms. One was the infiltration of Russian terms into Central Asians languages, partly to replace words of Arabic or Persian origin which were 'purged' and partly to introduce new concepts. Russian terms entered native languages as a result of editorial policy, so that "in Turkmenistan, the influx of Russian vocabulary is so great that in newspapers one may find whole sentences in which all the nouns are Russian,"¹²¹ and by "constant reiteration in school."¹²² Despite these, "Most people continue to employ their regional dialects in conversation. In speech the 'standard' language appears to be limited to the intelligentsia... the gap between the standard and the spoken language is indicated by the fact that some Uzbek authors provide glossaries."¹²³

A study by Bennigsen suggested that even in literary language the take-up of Russian terms was slight. Examination of Tadjik dictionaries revealed that although the proportion of words of Russian origin had grown, these were overwhelmingly scientific and technical terms expressing new concepts. Although Bennigsen regrets that "whole groups of native words expressing complete concepts have disappeared altogether," the example he gives is that of "measurements such as *tanab*, *sang* [which] have given way to *gektar*, *kilometr* etcetera."¹²⁴ These new words were neologisms in Russian, 'international' scientific terms which were becoming universal. Their adoption does indicate some cultural change but they are hardly symptomatic of imperialism. Although the technical vocabulary for Chemistry contained many Russian

and international loans, that for agriculture, a traditional activity, remained dominated by Tadjik terms. The impression gained is that Russian was being used where necessary as a supplement to rather than a replacement for Tadjik. This is underlined by Bennigsen's examination of the use of the word *sovyet*. In Russian the word means both an advisory council and as an abstract noun, advice. Bennigsen observed that in Tadjik usage *sovyet* referred only to a government assembly, as *Sovyet-i Oli* (Supreme Soviet), the traditional terms *majlis* (assembly) and *maslihat* (*sic* - *nasihat*: advice) remaining in everyday use. It can be seen from the above example that Russian grammar had failed to make an impact on Tadjik.

For Bacon such superficial changes in vocabulary "do not suggest any disintegration of Central Asian culture or any wholesale acceptance of Russian culture."¹²⁵ In fact, although the consolidation of national languages may have prevented the development of a 'pan-Turkic' or 'pan-Islamic' anti-Russian movement, it tended to hinder rather than to help Russian cultural penetration since it facilitated the creation of distinct Central Asian nations where previously there had been none. "Parallel with linguistic parcelling out can be observed economic and cultural unification. In such circumstances is it possible to speak of the consolidation of stable 'nation-states' firmly united by a *Schicksalgemeinschaft*?"¹²⁶

A more serious threat to Central Asian culture lay in linguistic Russification's second aspect, the replacement of a native language by Russian. It had been suggested that the Soviet goal was that Russian, rather than being simply a *lingua franca*, should become the sole medium of discourse throughout the USSR:

Not only are the Russian people to be recognised as the leading and guiding force in the country, but the Russian language is assigned a position superior to that of all other languages spoken in the Soviet Union, and future Communist nations of the USSR are envisaged as merging into one culture with one common language, Russian.¹²⁷

Under certain circumstances it was essential to speak Russian. This was the case in the Red Army, which required a single language of command. It was also necessary in all-Union bodies. There were instances in which it was fashionable or politic to use Russian as, according to Allworth, was the case in the Academies of Science where

“Asian scientists, wanting to seem more patriotic than the Russians, use the Russian language to prove their loyalty.”¹²⁸ In fact,

Between 1932 and 1959 the Kazakh academics at the Alma-Ata Academy of Science wrote their works chiefly in Russian. Only 26% of books and articles published by the Kazakh Academy of Sciences in non-technical and non-scientific subjects appeared in the Kazakh language.¹²⁹

[the Academies of Science] where the Russian language has always been in vogue, present a flagrant example of foreign influence in the choice of language of publication.¹³⁰

The use of Russian in these circumstances can be attributed to the desire to reach the widest possible audience. Allworth noted that books intended for domestic consumption tended to be written in local languages. In Turkmenistan, on a year-by-year average Turkmen publications outnumbered Russian by a ratio of 2:1. A large number of works also appeared in translation rather than their original Russian. Allworth was forced to conclude that “As a general rule, the most important among the Asian nations habitually use their native language very widely for those books and pamphlets which they themselves distributed.”¹³¹

Kolarz claimed that “practically every Soviet institution assists the regime in promoting the cause of the Great Russian people and the Great Russian language.”¹³² As well as publishing, this included education.

“Soviet leaders had expected that through education the peoples of Central Asia would become Russianised.”¹³³ The number of people educated in Russian was greater than the number of Russians, but this did not imply any great degree of or desire for linguistic assimilation. A good knowledge of Russian was an essential skill for economic and social advancement. Russian was “the road to prestige, power and material benefits.”¹³⁴ Nove and Newth noted that the 480 extra school hours a week needed for the study of Russian in native-language schools provided a disincentive to attend such institutions. Many ethnic minorities were additionally obliged to attend Russian-language schools in the absence of schools using their own languages. The fact that educational provision met centrally approved targets rather than local demand enabled the authorities to insist on Russian-medium schooling. However, language change was not always in favour of Russian. Bacon noted that minorities whose

culture was similar to that of the republican majority tended to adopt the latter's language. Where it was feasible to use a non-Russian language assimilation into Russian did not occur. As Wheeler had it, "there is no evidence to suggest that the Soviet Union actually succeeds in hindering the development of native languages. On the contrary, all signs point to a remarkable ability of the local languages to survive in the face of strong pressures."¹³⁵

Pipes claimed that native-language use was on the increase in some areas. Assimilation was strongest amongst speakers of other Slavic languages and among groups living outside their 'ethnic homelands'.

If we next turn to the minorities with distinct cultures, living in border areas and with historic roots on their present territories, we find that Russification either has made little or no progress or has lost ground. The Turkic inhabitants... show an astounding loyalty to their native languages... of the twenty million Muslims (Volga Tatars excepted), only 200,000, or 1% have become linguistically russianised.¹³⁶

This suggests that state coercion is not in itself enough to force cultural change. Utility is also a consideration. If a person cannot see the point of a change he will not adopt it, although under certain circumstances he might appear to do so if it will be personally advantageous either for protection or for promotion. "The oasis peoples quietly adhere to their own culture unless the advantages of change are obvious."¹³⁷

This attitude towards language change was noted by Bacon as being symptomatic of attitudes towards social change. In most cases assimilation into Russian culture had not occurred. "Such proffered elements as do not fit into their own patterns are rejected,"¹³⁸ "only those features of Russian culture which accord with the Muslim society's general evolution... seem to make a lasting impact."¹³⁹ As a result, "Muslim society has remained very nearly intact despite forty years under the Soviet regime. The Soviet way of life has hardly penetrated it."¹⁴⁰

The nuclear family promoted by the Russians was only gradually coming into being, people still tending to live in extended family groups dominated by a patriarchal figure. Despite Soviet insistence on women's equality, traditional attitudes towards

women's roles persisted. Such practices as polygyny and female seclusion not only continued but were spreading as status symbols. Central Asians seemed adept at avoiding Russian cultural prescriptions whilst appearing superficially Russianised when necessary. In Pipes' term, they presented a "crust of assimilation."¹⁴¹

Examples Bacon gives are the custom of keeping two guest rooms, one furnished in European style as Soviet society demanded and another with traditional furnishings, and Central Asians' avoidance of Russian food and eating habits by taking their main meal at home in the evening rather than in the works canteen. Employment choices also reflected a desire to avoid culturally uncongenial situations. Factory work in cities was avoided in favour of village life where it was easier to preserve traditional cultural norms. Even in the realm of higher education, Central Asians showed a clear preference for the Arts, where they could develop their own cultures via the medium of their own languages than for the Sciences, which were taught via Russian. What was occurring in the face of Russian political domination was a withdrawal into a private cultural world in the home, the family and the kin-group beyond the reach of Soviet supervision.

Central Asians in refusing to assimilate to Soviet norms were rejecting the Soviet Union itself. "The nationalism of the non-Russian peoples in the face of persecution is always finding new forms of camouflage, particularly by escaping into the cultural field."¹⁴² If Russian political imperialism had succeeded in subjugating the peoples of Central Asia and forcing them under Russian dominance, the project of cultural imperialism had failed. "There has been some drawing together within the ethnic groups of Central Asia and, to a smaller extent, among the peoples of Central Asia, but there has been little *sblizhnost'* (*sic*) between Central Asians and Russians."¹⁴³

2.iv) The Consequences of Colonialism

Folson criticised the use of a colonialist discourse in studying the Soviet Union. If the preponderance of one ethnic group in a country constituted colonialism, then "it would be difficult to think of one major country in the world today that could escape the charge... If the mere fact of a dominant ethnic group in a heterogeneous country

were to constitute colonialism, then many an African country would stand condemned.”¹⁴⁴ The idea of empire comprising the dominance of one people by another was central to the West’s conception of the USSR as an empire. As Pipes said, the Soviet Union was “an ordinary empire of many nations dominated by one.”¹⁴⁵

Unlike most European and American scholars, who tended to separate Central Asia from the rest of the Soviet Union and consider the former region in isolation, Folson insisted that the Soviet political system “should not be interpreted as an attempt by European Russia to dominate the non-European nationalities. It is merely a feature of the same centralized, totalitarian control that obtains everywhere in the Soviet Union.”¹⁴⁶ This was conceded by Nove and Newth when they asserted that

The transformation of Transcaucasian and Central Asian society is only a special case of the transformation of society throughout the Union... It is difficult to argue that the kinds of pressures exerted at the periphery were essentially different from those exerted in the heart of Russia proper.¹⁴⁷

They then asserted that “it cannot be said that the sacrifices imposed on the peasants in the republics we are considering matches those borne by the Russians or the Ukrainians.”¹⁴⁸

Despite these caveats the weight of opinion held that a colonial dynamic was in operation in Central Asia. The principle feature of that dynamic in the post-War era was that colonised peoples would gradually become Westernised, and, becoming Westernised, demand independence. Lüthy saw colonialism as a part of a global Europeanisation which resulted not in identification with but opposition to Europeans. Plamenetz considered that under colonial conditions

the Europeans started among the peoples of Asia and Africa a process of change which those peoples now no longer wish to stop or reverse but which they aspire to control; and they cannot control it unless they are self-governing. This aspiration and the desire for self-government are themselves effects of the process started by the Europeans.¹⁴⁹

Lüthy insisted that “it is no paradox to say that the colonial peoples have shaken off European tutelage in order to acquire more quickly what their European tutors promised them.”¹⁵⁰

The argument is in essence that colonialism engenders modernisation which in turn creates nationalism, which as Marx observed and Hobsbawm has argued was a result of the social changes brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation. In the context of a discussion on colonialism and nationalism within the Soviet Union, Pipes argued that

By pulling into national life the mass of previously isolated and passive popular groups, the process of modernisation inadvertently promoted nationalism and national differences, because national identity is most deeply rooted in these very groups... Mass education and mass literacy also promote national distinctions by institutionalising local languages, histories, literatures etc.¹⁵¹

‘Modernisation’ consisted of the importation of European models of education, social, legal and economic relations from the metropolis, with the colony coming to resemble the colonial power. Colonies of France became ‘more French’, those of Britain ‘more British’ and those of Russia ‘more Russian’.

Whether local Muslims are happy to have paid this price is another question, since many of them clearly perceive the indivisibility of Sovietization, industrialization and Russification.¹⁵²

The question of whether Soviet Asians were happy to have become Russified was an important one. The history of other colonialisms suggested that it was unlikely.

It is a common fallacy to assume that cultural benefits win the gratitude of colonial peoples... On the contrary, it is often the best things that colonial Governments do that bring them the most hatred. It is unlikely that the Soviet Empire is any exception to this rule. Annamese intellectuals owed their education to the French, Indian intellectuals to the British, yet this did not make them grateful admirers of British and French rule... it is unlikely that the attitude of the Uzbek intellectual is different.¹⁵³

Few denied that Soviet rule had brought benefits on a material level to the peoples of Central Asia. Since the 1950s Wheeler had been chronicling the economic development of the region in *Central Asian Review*. Nove and Newth examined the material benefits of this development in some depth. Central Asia, they observed, was a net beneficiary of federal spending, receiving more in grants and subsidies than it contributed in revenues. Per capita income, less than the USSR average, was greater

than Spain's or Turkey's. Although income disparity between Russia and Tadjikistan was on a ratio of 2:1, this was "about equal to the ratio between West Germany and Italy but much smaller than that, say, between West Germany and Portugal or Greece."¹⁵⁴ Non-monetary indices also pointed to the relative wealth of Central Asia. In 1928 the region's rates of fuel consumption, urbanisation, literacy and infant mortality had reached a stage not attained by India or Pakistan until 1962, by which year Central Asia fell between Italy and Japan. Educational levels were high, as were the provision of social services such as pensions, benefits and health care. In 1959 Central Asians were served by three times as many doctors as Turkey and six times as many as Iran.

Recognition of developmental disparity between Soviet Asia and other Asian states was not new. An anonymous contributor to the *Journal* of the Royal Central Asian Society stated that "whereas before the Revolution the material condition of the Muslim peoples of Transcaucasia and Central Asia was much the same as that of adjacent countries, it is now very much higher."¹⁵⁵ Wheeler observed that "in their standard of living, in general and technical education, and in industry and in agriculture [Central Asia is] far ahead of many independent eastern countries."¹⁵⁶

Economic progress however would not necessarily translate into support for the regime. Wheeler considered that

Although the material conditions of the peoples of Soviet Central Asia has [*sic*] greatly improved during the Soviet regime, their political and cultural development on national and traditional lines has been - and is still being - impeded.¹⁵⁷

Kolarz highlighted this as a source of the kind of discontent which had led to anti-colonial movements elsewhere, stating that "good schools are no compensation for political freedom"¹⁵⁸ and citing the Guinean leader Sekou Touré as stating that people prefer "freedom in poverty to slavery in abundance,"¹⁵⁹ a proposition which has not been proven. Nadel and Curtis considered that "all the talk of civilizing missions and all the material improvements imaginable would never have convinced the majority of African, Arab, Indian or Asian peoples that imperialism was much more than a euphemism for exploitation."¹⁶⁰

Seton-Watson set out this argument in some length both in an article published in *Problems of Communism* and in his book on nationalism and Communism.

Soviet spokesmen are entitled to point to the great material progress achieved under Soviet rule... Supporters of the Central African Federation have argued that it brought economic benefits to the Africans and that it would have brought more had it been allowed to continue. They may be right. But they have missed the point, which is that the Africans of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland want to run their own countries. It may be that they will run them badly, but they want to be their own masters. The Soviet government uses essentially the same arguments as Sir Roy Welensky. It has developed the resources of Uzbekistan. Some of the benefits of this development have gone to the Uzbeks, some to the Russians living in Uzbekistan, and some into the great maw of the totalitarian Leviathan in Moscow. But at no time has the Soviet government been willing to consider for a moment allowing the Uzbeks to run their own country... the fact remains that the imperialist-colonialist relationship is inherently artificial, humiliating and unacceptable. The colonial peoples would prefer to be free of tutelage, even if it is benevolent. If this is true of Western Empires, it is also true of the Soviet one.¹⁶¹

Asian and African nationalists claim... that self-government is more important than good government. [President of Ghana] Dr Nkrumah has declared that the keys of the political kingdom must be given first. But these keys have always been denied to Central Asians. It may be argued that Socialism is a better form of government than capitalist democracy, that Stalin and Khrushchev have done their job of colonial development better than Welensky: the fact remains that it has been the same sort of job.¹⁶²

Colonialism had as a logical corollary nationalism in reaction against it. Nove and Newth argued that this was not necessarily a mechanistic process, but that it depended on the

attitude of the people to their neighbours and to their own national status. One has but to contrast the relationship between England and Ireland on the one hand and England and Scotland on the other. Until 1921 they shared common membership of a constitutional multinational State, the United Kingdom. The differences did not lie in institutions but essentially in history and national and religious consciousness.¹⁶³

A people could become assimilated, but the more separate their cultures the less likely this would be and the more likely that colonialism would end in the establishment of independent states. According to Hayit "the Turkestani people radically differentiate themselves from the Russians in culture, national characteristics, language

and literature, values and customs, history, religion mentality, view on life and territory.”¹⁶⁴ This would seem to suggest that the people of Turkestan were essentially unassimilable into a Russian cultural milieu, making independence the only way of ending the colonial relationship.

Central Asians were seen as being sufficiently different to Russians to make anti-colonial sentiment inevitable, especially since anti-colonialism was the dominant movement throughout the world and “it would be illogical had the development of numerous national states in the orient met with Turkestani sympathy while at the same time failing to give fresh impetus to a sense of national independence.”¹⁶⁵

Rywkin quoted Pipes as stating that “the social and cultural processes occurring in Central Asia do not differ fundamentally from those taking place in other colonial or ex-colonial societies.”¹⁶⁶ Kolarz was more forthright:

The colonial problem of Russia cannot be viewed in isolation from the colonial problem presenting itself in other parts of the globe, for the struggle for the fulfilment of national aspirations among the colonial peoples has proceeded everywhere on a similar pattern.¹⁶⁷

If Central Asia was essentially the same as other areas of Asia and Africa, it should behave similarly, the more so since “While an African guest is admiring new Tashkent factories, his Uzbek host cannot help wondering why nationalism and self-determination are virtues abroad and sins at home.”¹⁶⁸ The idea that an Uzbek might be a *Soviet* nationalist does not figure. As Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay put it,

Could not the contacts between the Muslims of the USSR and the young Asian and African states... favour the re-emergence of ideas close to those which Sultan Galiev put forward earlier, notably a wish to construct a Muslim Socialism without the Russians?¹⁶⁹

Kolarz saw the development of a nationalist movement in Central Asia as concomitant on the region’s colonial status:

Colonialism cannot be destroyed in non-Communist Asia and Africa and remain alive in Eastern Europe, Transcaucasia and Central Asia. In the long run those parts of the world cannot remain outside the mainstream of international developments.¹⁷⁰

Even the granting of full rights to Central Asians could not prevent this development. Portugal and France had regarded colonial subjects as the equals of their European citizens, but it remained the case that “people who until a few years ago still considered themselves as ‘Black Frenchmen’ have proudly proclaimed themselves as Senegalese, Dahomeyans or ‘Ivoriens’.”¹⁷¹

Folson suggested that this might have been because the French and Portuguese governments’ claims “did too much violence to the facts... no-one believes that in metropolitan Portugal the African can expect to be treated on a basis of equality with the white Portuguese.”¹⁷² Kolarz himself admitted that “the colour problem which prevents the full integration of the American nation is absent in the Soviet Union,”¹⁷³ however these considerations did not concern Western scholars unduly, in part because for skin colour some different distinguishing characteristic, such as a cultural identity, could be substituted. What was of importance was not so much the nature of the difference between Russians and Central Asians but that this difference was not subject to a change which might reduce it.

The relationship between Russia and Central Asia was another example of the clash between European and non-European civilisations or between ‘white people’ and ‘black people’ which formed the overriding characteristic of the post-War international order and which because of the “smouldering resentment of non-white people throughout the world”¹⁷⁴ could only be resolved by a disassociation and constitution into separate states.

Although this resentment had in the first instance been directed against the West, leading some in the ‘black’ world to flirt with Communism, ultimately

this division between the ‘white’ and ‘coloured’ peoples will probably matter more in the future than the division between the Communist and liberal countries... the resentment of the coloured people against the whites, if it persists, will probably no longer be directed almost exclusively against the western nations.¹⁷⁵

2.v) Conclusion

The presentation of Soviet Central Asia as a colony depended on several factors. Reluctance to examine precisely what was meant by the word 'colony' was one of these. Equally important was the psychological division between 'Europe' and 'Asia,' between 'white' and 'not white,' in the minds of Western scholars many of whom came from political traditions which depended for their survival on such a distinction.

This cleavage into 'white' and 'not white' as primary characteristics, also manifest in American domestic politics and seen to be expressed in white oppression and non-white resistance ran directly through the Soviet Union, splitting off Central Asia from the European republics. Central Asians were seen in the West as 'not white.' According to Hostler, "the Turkish regions of the Soviet Russian Empire historically and culturally gravitate towards the Middle and Near East, the centre of Islamic civilisation,"¹⁷⁶ away from identification with the European/Russian aspect of the Soviet Union. The two were seen as fundamentally incompatible. Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejay noted that it was the Kazan' Tatar Sultan Galiev who formulated "the only attempt to define the revolutionary process in the colonial world"¹⁷⁷ and that this demanded the independence of Asians from European control as a pre-requisite for establishing socialism.

The division between Russians and non-Russians was also aided by the common but inaccurate Western habit of substituting the word 'Russia' for 'Soviet Union', a habit which had its echo in everyday Russian usage. If the state as a whole was 'Russia', it followed that the non-Russian areas were not part of that state but had a subordinate status. In the case of Central Asia this status was that of colony. The idea that a Central Asian might identify with and be loyal to the Soviet Union as his state was scarcely considered. According to Seton-Watson the apparent loyalty of Central Asians to the regime evidenced by the absence of groups analogous to the Indian National Congress or Egyptian Wafd "proves only that the Soviet security forces are efficient."¹⁷⁸ Commonly understood, the Soviet Union and Russia were not distinct entities. A non-Russian could hardly identify with a Russian state run by and for Russians.

Although some scholars were unsure of the potential for anti-colonial (anti-white/anti-western) revolt in Central Asia, the theoretical potential for such a development was almost universally acknowledged. Seton-Watson stated, "whether beneath the totalitarian surface nationalism is still strong among the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union is hard to say, but the historical experience of other Empires suggests that it is likely to be."¹⁷⁹ Only Nove and Newth dissented from this view. Uniquely, they denied that the white/non-white divide ran through the USSR. Instead they wrote that

If in the next generation or so opinion throughout the world polarises along lines of colour, with the Whites against the rest - which will mean the rich nations against the poor, the advanced against the primitive - the peripheral minorities of the USSR seem more likely to take their stand on the side of the North and West - which includes for this purpose the advanced region of the USSR - than on the side of the East and South.¹⁸⁰

This opinion found no support. The idea that Asians could feel themselves closer to Europeans than to other Asians who were 'closer in spirit' to them was inconceivable. Caroe, Hostler and Monteil stressed the racial and cultural homogeneity of the peoples of Central Asia as a Turkic and Muslim bloc in order to contrast them to the Russians, differentiating 'Asian' from 'European' in a quasi-racist manner. The thesis that Russia was a colonial oppressor depended on precisely this division. Removing the racial argument about the fundamental incompatibility of Europeans with non-Europeans destroys the theory.

One result of this conceptual division between the European USSR and Central Asia based on assumptions about race and culture was that the study of Central Asia developed into a separate branch of Soviet Studies treated in isolation from the rest of the USSR. The dynamics of 'colonial' society and of 'metropolitan' society differ and are studied in isolation of one another.

The majority of works on the USSR save those which specifically feature the words 'Central Asia', 'Muslim' or 'nationalities' (this last term a euphemism for the rule of non-Russians by Russians) in their titles either ignore Central Asia altogether or

make only passing reference to the region. Conversely, works dealing with Central Asia present the region as a special case, seldom inviting comparison with other parts of the USSR. In general works with titles such as "Religion in the USSR" or "The Nationalities Problem of the USSR" Central Asia is treated differently to the European Soviet Union or Siberia. One study of Soviet religion attributes different motives to pilgrimage in the Baltic and in Central Asia, ascribing a political import to the phenomenon in the Central Asian case which does not feature in the analysis of the Baltic republics.

As Russia's colony it was within Central Asia that nationalist opposition to Russian/Communist rule would arise. Evidence for the existence of anti-colonial sentiment could be derived from Central Asia's history under Communism and the reaction of the indigenous Central Asian elite who would lead any revolt against Russia.

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- ¹ **Nove & Newth** (1967) p.13
 - ² **Kolarz** (1952) p.v
 - ³ **Kohn** (1958) p.7
 - ⁴ **Lüthy** (1964) p.27
 - ⁵ **Folson** (1964) p.19
 - ⁶ *ibid.* p.27
 - ⁷ **Kohn** (1958)
 - ⁸ **Lüthy**(1964). p.27
 - ⁹ **Kohn** (1958) p.4
 - ¹⁰ *ibid.* p.11
 - ¹¹ **Lüthy** (1964) p.27
 - ¹² **Nove & Newth** (1967) p.113
 - ¹³ **Ross** (1982) p.4
 - ¹⁴ **Seton-Watson** (1964a) p.20
 - ¹⁵ **Nadel & Curtis** (1964) p.18
 - ¹⁶ *ibid.* p.1
 - ¹⁷ *ibid.* p.3
 - ¹⁸ **Plamenetz** (1960) p.vii
 - ¹⁹ **Palmer** (1958) p.308
 - ²⁰ **Rex** (1982) pp.200, 208
 - ²¹ **Plamenetz** (1960) pp.8, 10
 - ²² *ibid.* p.11
 - ²³ *ibid.* pp.78, 79
 - ²⁴ *ibid.* p.150
 - ²⁵ **Palmer** (1958) p.276
 - ²⁶ **Plamenetz** (1960) p.7
 - ²⁷ **Stahl** (1951) p.20
 - ²⁸ *ibid.* p.26
 - ²⁹ *ibid.* p.68
 - ³⁰ *ibid.* p.12
 - ³¹ **Armstrong** (1968) p.14

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- ³² *ibid.* p.24
³³ **Conquest** (1962) p.7
³⁴ **Armstrong** (1968) p.19
³⁵ **Wheeler** (1960b) p.xi
³⁶ **Kolarz** (1952) pp.5/6
³⁷ **Leprince-Ringuet** (1951) p.194
³⁸ **Jafri** (1953) p.163
³⁹ **Moraes** (1964) p.22
⁴⁰ **Rywkin** (1963) p.99
⁴¹ **Bennigsen & d'Encausse** (1955) p.1
⁴² both *ibid.* p.2
⁴³ **Allworth** (1967) 1989 edition p.209
⁴⁴ **Wheeler** (1960b) p.47
⁴⁵ **Nove & Newth** (1967) p.129
⁴⁶ **Wheeler** (1960a) p.100
⁴⁷ *ibid.* p.94
⁴⁸ **Wheeler** (1960b) p.23
⁴⁹ **Nove & Newth** (1967) p.92
⁵⁰ **Rywkin** (1982)
⁵¹ **Caroe** (1953) p.171
⁵² **Nove & Newth** (1967) p.44
⁵³ **Rywkin** (1963) p.78
⁵⁴ **Caroe** (1953) p.171
⁵⁵ *ibid.* p.141
⁵⁶ **Conquest** (1962) p.43
⁵⁷ **Moraes** (1964) p.23
⁵⁸ **Caroe** (1953) p.141
⁵⁹ **Stahl** (1951) p.73
⁶⁰ **Rywkin** (1963) p.81
⁶¹ *ibid.*
⁶² **Conquest** (1962) p.7
⁶³ **Jelavich** (1983) p.415
⁶⁴ **Kolarz** (1964) p.53
⁶⁵ **Bennigsen** (1957) p.34
⁶⁶ **Bennigsen & Lemercier-Quelquejay** (1961) p.1
⁶⁷ **Wheeler** (1960a) p.97; (1960b) p.22
⁶⁸ **Wheeler** (1960b) p.18
⁶⁹ *ibid.* p.20
⁷⁰ **Wheeler** (1960a) p.97
⁷¹ *ibid.* p.23
⁷² **Wheeler** (1964) p.127
⁷³ *ibid.* p.134
⁷⁴ **Hostler** (1957) p.163
⁷⁵ **Monteil** (1953) p.136
⁷⁶ **Kolarz** (1964) p.15
⁷⁷ *ibid.* p.55
⁷⁸ *ibid.* p.54
⁷⁹ *ibid.* p.52
⁸⁰ *ibid.* p.27
⁸¹ **Conquest** (1962). p.18
⁸² **Kolarz** (1964) p.25
⁸³ **Hayit** (1956) p.254
⁸⁴ **Conquest** (1962) p.109
⁸⁵ **Bennigsen** (1958) p.411
⁸⁶ **Nove & Newth** (1967) p.117
⁸⁷ **Seton-Watson** (1964a) pp.27-28

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- ⁸⁸ Kolarz (1964) p.130
⁸⁹ *ibid.* p.43
⁹⁰ Rywkin (1963) p.12
⁹¹ Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay (1968) p.220
⁹² Conquest (1962) p.123
⁹³ Leprince-Ringuet (1951) p.195
⁹⁴ Monteil (1953) p.141
⁹⁵ Wheeler (1960a) p.101
⁹⁶ Wheeler (1964) p.128
⁹⁷ Kolarz (1964) p.60
⁹⁸ *ibid.* p.136
⁹⁹ *ibid.* p.62
¹⁰⁰ Seton-Watson (1964a) p.26
¹⁰¹ Conquest (1962) p.45
¹⁰² Rywkin (1963) p.89
¹⁰³ Stahl (1951)
¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* p.106
¹⁰⁵ Wheeler (1964) p.179
¹⁰⁶ Wheeler (1966) p.111
¹⁰⁷ Nove & Newth (1967) p.115
¹⁰⁸ Wheeler (1964) p.224
¹⁰⁹ *cf* Saxe, J. "Dilemmas of Empire: the British and French Experience" in Strausz-Hupé & Hazard (1968) Chapter 3.
¹¹⁰ Wheeler (1960b) p.33
¹¹¹ Bacon (1966) p.156
¹¹² Bennigsen & d'Encausse (1955) p.4
¹¹³ Kolarz (1964) p.26
¹¹⁴ cited *ibid.* p.27
¹¹⁵ Bennigsen (1953) p.13
¹¹⁶ Bacon (1966) p.189
¹¹⁷ Bennigsen & d'Encausse (1955) p.12
¹¹⁸ Wheeler (1960b) p.35
¹¹⁹ Allworth (1967) p.559
¹²⁰ Wheeler (1960b) p.36
¹²¹ Bacon (1966) p.197
¹²² *ibid.* p.195
¹²³ *ibid.* p.197
¹²⁴ Bennigsen (1958) p.28
¹²⁵ Bacon (1966) p.200
¹²⁶ Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay (1961) p.36
¹²⁷ Rywkin (1963) p.88
¹²⁸ Allworth (1966) p.551
¹²⁹ *ibid.* p.546
¹³⁰ *ibid.* p.550
¹³¹ *ibid.* p.543
¹³² Kolarz (1964) p.37
¹³³ Bacon (1966) p.210
¹³⁴ Pipes (1964) p.4
¹³⁵ Wheeler (1960b) p.37
¹³⁶ Pipes (1964) p.6
¹³⁷ Bacon (1966) p.213
¹³⁸ *ibid.* p.208
¹³⁹ Pipes (1957) p.30
¹⁴⁰ Bennigsen (1958) p.233
¹⁴¹ Pipes (1957) p.30
¹⁴² Kolarz (1964) p.40

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- ¹⁴³ **Bacon** (1966) p.217
¹⁴⁴ **Folson** (1964) pp.19, 20
¹⁴⁵ **Pipes** (1964) p.5
¹⁴⁶ **Folson** (1964) p.20
¹⁴⁷ **Nove & Newth** (1967) p.119
¹⁴⁸ *ibid.* p.114
¹⁴⁹ **Plamenetz** (1960) p.16
¹⁵⁰ **Lüthy** (1964) p.35
¹⁵¹ **Pipes** (1964) p.3
¹⁵² **Rywkin** (1964) p.10
¹⁵³ **Seton-Watson** (1964a) pp.63/4
¹⁵⁴ **Nove & Newth** (1967) p.43
¹⁵⁵ **A.S.** (1959) pp.5/6
¹⁵⁶ **Wheeler** (1957) p.198
¹⁵⁷ **Wheeler** (1966) p.112
¹⁵⁸ **Kolarz** (1964) p.127
¹⁵⁹ *ibid.* p.216
¹⁶⁰ **Nadel & Curtis** (1964) p.22
¹⁶¹ **Seton-Watson** (1964b) p.18
¹⁶² **Seton-Watson** (1964a) pp.26/7
¹⁶³ **Nove & Newth** (1967) p.121
¹⁶⁴ **Hayit** (1962) p.209
¹⁶⁵ *ibid.* p.208
¹⁶⁶ **Rywkin** (1963) p.98
¹⁶⁷ **Kolarz** (1952) p.v
¹⁶⁸ **Rywkin** (1963) p.159
¹⁶⁹ **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1968) p.238
¹⁷⁰ **Kolarz** (1964) p.125
¹⁷¹ *ibid.* p.129
¹⁷² **Folson** (1964) p.20
¹⁷³ **Kolarz** (1952) p.303
¹⁷⁴ **Nadel & Curtis** (1964) p.24
¹⁷⁵ **Plamenetz** (1960) pp.188, 191
¹⁷⁶ **Hostler** (1957) p.2
¹⁷⁷ **Bennigsen** (1958a) p.400
¹⁷⁸ **Seton-Watson** (1964b) p.29
¹⁷⁹ *ibid.* p.33
¹⁸⁰ **Nove & Newth** (1967) p.132

Chapter 3: Anti-Colonialism in Central Asia

3.i) Introduction

As a colony, nationalist movements were expected in Central Asia. During the 1950s and 1960s scholars focused on events of the C20th which appeared to indicate the existence of such movements. The evidence was scanty despite Wheeler's assertion that "There are many indications that the authorities are dissatisfied with and even apprehensive about the attitude of the Muslims towards the regime."¹ Ultimately the political case was not proven, but there remained a cultural argument to answer and this seemed more persuasive, in part because of a conflation of the terms 'nationalism' and 'national identity.'

In this chapter I shall examine some of the evidence presented for an innate nationalist movement and discuss arguments for and against the existence of a nationalist elite before looking at the assumed reasons for Central Asian nationalism being manifest.

3.ii) The Basmachis

'Basmachi' is commonly used in both Soviet and Western writings to refer to the guerrilla bands active in Central Asia at the time of the Revolution and the Civil War.

Caroe provided one of the first Western accounts of the Basmachi movement. Reviewing Caroe's work in *Problems of Communism*, British journalist Jules Menken stated that it was "the most authoritative book on his subject published since 1917... the first adequate English account of the Basmachi rebellion."² Caroe's characterisation was highly influential. However, it presents several difficulties.

Caroe indicated that the word Basmachi derives from a Turkic root, however he fails to mention either that it was a root meaning 'bandit' or that it was a Russian coinage. The impression given is that the term was a self-appellation of the Basmachis,

implying a unity of purpose and of organisation. The possibility that it referred to disparate groups of brigands, as it itself suggests, was not considered.

Caroe compared the Basmachis to the tribesmen he was familiar with on the Indo-Afghan border: "Their stamping ground was in the mountains and glens around the Ferghana valley, breeding a type of tribesman very like the Afridis and Waziris of the North-West Frontier."³

Caroe's comparison with the North-West Frontier, with which the Ferghana shares little, is revealing. The Frontier has long had romantic connotations in Britain, where it has been associated with mysterious but fiercely independent warrior peoples. Caroe devoted an entire chapter of his work to Enver Pasha, a romantic figure in the Western sense, whom some would regard as a minor player.

That the Basmachis cohered as a group is implied rather than argued. They not only had a common name in Caroe's scheme, they had a common social structure. They were comparable to a tribe. This term implies some kind of blood link, unity through a relatively fixed and universally recognised leadership and means of transferring that leadership, a kind of 'organic' link to social structure and a name and/or symbols by which the tribe may be recognised and with which its members can identify.⁴ Although there were such groups in Central Asia the Basmachi 'movement' lacked any of these features. The conception of the Basmachis as a tribe was important for Caroe, since tribal unity might be supposed to survive material changes. Thus it seemed unlikely that the Basmachis would ever wholly vanish:

The Basmachi tribal cohesion was sufficient to enable them to continue as a menace to the Soviets long after the death of Enver Pasha... there was talk on the Peshawar border of the Basmachi movement as late as the time of Hitler's invasion of Russia in 1941, and even today the fire may not be wholly quenched.⁵

It would be intriguing to know precisely what this 'talk' consisted of. Was it speculation, recollection, intrigue? Caroe, who as the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province should have known, does not say, and his conclusion is purely speculative.

Whilst admitting there had been a failure of understanding between the Basmachis and the Jadids as regards aims, Caroe ascribed this to a failure of communication similar to that encountered by Nehru in his overtures to the Afridis and Waziris. Both parties sought the same end, independence, but they expressed their desires differently. However, if the analogy between the Basmachis and the tribesmen of the North-West Frontier may legitimately be made Nehru's difficulties might shed some light on the actual nature of the movement. The frontiersmen were opposed to any central government control irrespective of whether it was colonial. The liberal democratic ideals of the Jadids might be supposed to have been as abhorrent to the Basmachis as were those of the Congress to the Afridis. In order for Caroe's analogy to remain convincing it must be applied only sparingly.

The characterisation of the Basmachis as an organised and ideologically motivated group appears also in Hostler, whose main source of information about them was the anti-Soviet agitator Kayum Khan.

In spite of the rivalry of individual chieftains and tribal feuds the pan-Turkist element of the Basmachi movement is clear since they grouped tribes and local 'sub-ethnic' units of Turkestanis in the fight against 'foreign' oppression.⁶

Hostler's use of inverted commas is unusual. Is he implying that Russian control was not foreign? If this is the case then it would argue against the characterisation of the Basmachis as a national liberation movement.

The Basmachi movement also featured heavily in Hayit's work. In his estimation, "In the history of the Turkestanis' war of liberation, the Basmachi movement is of particular importance because it must be seen not only as a mere uprising, but also as an armed civil war against Soviet supremacy."⁷

Unlike Caroe or Hostler, Hayit noted that the word 'Basmachi' was a Russian coinage, and he mentioned some other Soviet terms for the movement: "counterrevolutionary", "pan-Islamic reaction", "reaction of the capitalist element."⁸ Despite this he continued to use the term, although in general he refused to use Soviet

terminology. Thus he consistently spoke of 'Turkestan' as an undifferentiated whole, ignoring both traditional and Soviet social or territorial divisions. This use of the collective term 'Basmachi', like 'Turkestan' allowed Hayit to present an image of a unity.

For Hayit, the significance of the movement was that

For Turkestanis, the Basmachi movement was a school in the struggle for the shaping of their national destiny that was to come. It shows that Turkestanis are not merely observers of world events, but also take an active part in them... the Basmachi movement shows that it is wrong to characterise Turkestanis as 'a frightened and degenerate nation of religious fanatics', as is done in many travel books and Russian references.⁹

For Bennigsen too the Basmachis represented a coherent challenge to Soviet hegemony, which affected Soviet attitudes to Central Asia even when he was writing: "Party polemicists have not forgiven the Muslims for having been the most doggedly opposed to the new regime. The venture of the Basmachis has not been forgotten, and Soviet writers never fail to recall the religious nature of the movement."¹⁰

Conquest also described the Basmachis as an ideological movement. He linked them to a group of revolutionary independence movements, not all of them Central Asian or even Muslim, active around the time of the First World War. These included the Young Bukharans, the Alash Orda, the Kokhand government and groups in the Caucasus, the Crimea, Yakutia and Buriyatia. The purpose of mentioning these was to show that continued association with the Russians was not the wish of the Muslim peoples (although association was the declared goal of the Alash Orda).¹¹

These national movements were relatively easily suppressed, but

Even after the [Bolshevik] conquest, the Red Army in Turkestan had to conduct protracted warfare against the national resistance movement which originated in the Ferghana Valley and spread through Turkestan under the name of the Basmachestvo. Early Soviet documents testify to the popular support enjoyed by this movement.¹²

Thus the 1927 Great Soviet Encyclopaedia refers to "an almost mass movement of the *dekhan* population."¹³

Again, the Basmachis are presented as a single movement, with a base and a name (Conquest does not mention the Russian origin of the word 'Basmachestvo'), specifically aimed at the Russians and enjoying mass support, although it is hard to tell what an 'almost' mass movement might be nor where the *dekhan* (farming) community was situated: vast areas of Turkestan were not under cultivation. According to Conquest, this 'movement' continued for a number of years. As proof, he turned to another Soviet source, written in 1944:

Basmachi bands, entering into contract with bourgeois-nationalists and enemies of the people and infiltrating senior posts in the Soviet and Party apparatus, decided once again to invade Tadjik territory... During the first days of April 1931 bands... numbering up to two thousand men crossed the frontier and advanced into the departments of Tadjikistan.¹⁴

The validity of these Soviet claims can be questioned, although Conquest took them at face value. The first point to note is that the text was written at the height of the War. It is as much a propaganda as a historical work, warning of the need for vigilance against infiltration by somewhat vague 'enemies of the people'. We do not know precisely who these 'bands' were. They were not linked to any internal movement, although they had infiltrated the republican government (why did these 'infiltrators' not assist the 'bands'?), but were an organised external threat. The existence of a large organised opposition movement within Afghanistan seems unlikely. The country was just recovering from a period of instability under Emir Habibullah (Bacha-i Saqaw) in which such a group could have existed, but the authority of the central government was being restored. Further, there had recently (1929) been a Soviet invasion of the country, which "clearly intended to return [former Shah] Amanullah to the throne."¹⁵

The conflation of the different political strands functioning at the time of the Revolution is shown in the work of Michael Rywkin,¹⁶ who described the Basmachis and National Communists such as Sultan Galiev as the military and political wings of the same movement which was essentially anti-Russian, a position given strength by

Rywkin's contention that fewer Muslims fought for the Bolsheviks than for the French in Algeria. The Civil War in Central Asia should be seen as being not about ideology, as in the rest of the former Empire, but about national liberation: "The struggle between the Basmachis and the Soviet Russian troops was not between Communists and anti-Communists, as in Russia, but between Russians and Muslims."¹⁷

Politically, according to Rywkin, Galiev failed because he was "about thirty-five years ahead of [his] time and geographically misplaced"¹⁸ whereas the Basmachis failed partly as a result of disunity (seemingly contradicting Rywkin's own contention that there was a single anti-Russian movement) and partly as a result of economic advantages given to locals by the Bolsheviks, who for instance halved taxes. This last echoes a claim by Hayit that during the famine years aid was extended only to Communist party members, providing a strong incentive to cease resistance.

3.iii) The Khodzhaev Trial

Even after the Basmachis had been suppressed and Soviet rule firmly established, resistance apparently did not cease. The trial for treason in 1938 of former Jadid and President of Uzbekistan Faizullah Khodzhaev was regularly cited to show that at the time of the Second World War there remained considerable resistance to the Soviets throughout Central Asian society. The Khodzhaev trial was used as evidence that the pre-Revolutionary ideal of a united independent Turkestan had survived the creation of the national republics and that it was shared even by those who superficially appeared supportive of Soviet policies. The normally cautious Wheeler gave credence to this when he observed that

Hayit... says that Faizullah had always been secretly working for separation from the Soviet Union; but it is nevertheless not entirely established whether a real plot existed... In any event, there is at least a strong possibility that there was up to the outbreak of the Second World War a strong undercurrent of nationalist, anti-Soviet and anti-Russian feeling.¹⁹

A possibility is not hard evidence, but the idea of opposition is still not fully disproved. For unknown reasons, Wheeler rendered Khodzhaev's name as Hoja, losing the Russian suffix and suggesting that Khodzhaev was personally less Russified than

may have been the case. Wheeler's suggestion that Khodzhaev was involved in an anti-Soviet plot also sits uneasily with his insistence in the same work that "there is nothing to prove that such measures [as the 1956 execution of the First Secretary of the Azerbaijan Communist Party] relate to any important national movement."²⁰

In a later work Wheeler returned to the theme of elite opposition within Central Asia at the time of the Purge, noting that

The Purge convulsed the whole of the USSR, but its effects were particularly striking in Central Asia where there had been many rumblings of discontent and where the authorities suspected the existence of nationalist opposition among the Muslim Communist elite.²¹

Concrete evidence either for discontent or for governmental fear is lacking from Wheeler's text. No case is made for the Purge in Central Asia being motivated by causes other than those prevailing in the rest of the country, nor is there any discussion of what such causes were. Central Asia, whilst undergoing ostensibly the same influences as the rest of the Union, is *sui generis*. An event which occurs for one reason in one part of the USSR has on occurring in Central Asia a different cause. We are presented with shadowy 'authorities' about whom we know nothing save presumably that the Central Asian elite was excluded from them. What was the President of Uzbekistan if not an 'authority'?

Conquest took the Khodzhaev trial as clear evidence of nationalist unrest. He made no mention of the extent of the Purge in Russia itself: the example of Khodzhaev is taken as indicative of the situation in the minority areas but not in Russia, creating a dichotomy between the two and implying that the Purge was an event perpetrated by Russians on non-Russians rather than something which affected all parts of the USSR equally. Khodzhaev was executed, and

similar killings swept the Communist leadership of the minority areas... Yet even these measures did not stamp out the national feelings of the Uzbeks or other nations.²²

The evidence for Khodzhaev's nationalist activities came from his own confession to the court:

...we planned to develop agriculture in Uzbekistan so as to extend grain farming... in order to be independent of Russian grain; lastly, we had planned to develop industry, road building etcetera in such a way as to be more economically independent at the end of the First Five-Year Plan of the Soviet Union than ever before.²³

Whether or not this should properly be counted as nationalist activity is open to doubt, but a more serious criticism of the treatment of the trial as concrete evidence of opposition to Soviet rule comes from an independent source.

Scholars of the Purge are fortunate in that an eye-witness account of the Khodzhaev trial was written by a British diplomat. In 1938 Fitzroy Maclean was accredited to London's Moscow Embassy. He was present at the trial and his recollections of it were published in 1949 in his memoir *Eastern Approaches*. This book became an almost instant best-seller. It is inconceivable that a British scholar of Central Asia such as Conquest, who at the time of publication worked in the Foreign Office, might not have been aware of it.

Maclean records that Khodzhaev was accused at a mass trial. Alongside him in the dock were Bukharin, Rykov, Yagoda, Kestinsky and Rosengolts.ⁱ This evidence suggests that the Purge did not fall more heavily on Central Asia than elsewhere. The accused were all senior figures in the Soviet hierarchy, the architects and executors of the Stalinist policies they were accused of sabotaging. Maclean recorded the sensation at figures so close to the centre of Soviet power standing trial at all, and added that "the charges were equally sensational: espionage, sabotage, murder, high treason."²⁴

As incredible as the charges were the confessions obtained. Chernov, formerly Commissar for Agriculture, admitted to having "arranged for the destruction of tens of thousands of pigs and horses."²⁵

Khodzhaev, who was famous for his part in the Soviet Revolution in Central Asia, and who, while still in his twenties, had been President first of the People's Republic of Bokhara and then, since its formation in 1925, of the Uzbek Soviet

ⁱ Respectively formerly the Secretary-General of the Comintern, the Soviet Premier prior to Molotov, the head of the NKVD, the Vice-Commissar for Foreign Affairs and the Commissar for Foreign Trade.

Socialist Republic, announced that he had in fact been a clandestine 'bourgeois nationalist' ever since 1918; that his aim throughout had been to overthrow the local Soviet regime and set up an independent Central Asian state under British influence; that, with this object in view, he had deliberately sabotaged agriculture in order to cause discontent among the native population; and that for twenty years his apparent loyalty to Moscow had been no more than a blind.²⁶

Such could not have been the case.

If what we heard in court was the literal truth, if, ever since the Revolution, the highest offices of the State had been held by a band of traitors, spies, murderers and wreckers, whose sole aim had been to overthrow the Soviet regime, if the whole regime had from the start been riddled with treachery and corruption, how was it that such a galaxy of talent, with such opportunities, had obtained such a small measure of success, how was it that their most important achievements had been to spoil a relatively small quantity of eggs and butter and to hasten the demise of an elderly litterateur, who for forty years had been suffering from an incurable disease? For five years Yagoda, a notoriously ruthless man, had controlled the all-powerful NKVD, had had under his command the Kremlin guards; had had in his power the doctors who attended Stalin and the other leaders of the Party and Government; had had his private laboratory for the preparation of special poisons. Why had he not used all these opportunities to eliminate all those who stood in his way?²⁷

It is an important question, and one which none of the writers who mentioned the trial considered any more than they questioned how a movement as well organised, highly motivated and popular as the Basmachis were supposed to have been could have failed where the Finns succeeded. If Khodzhaev was the nationalist he was alleged to have been, why did he spend so long establishing the Soviet regime? Whatever else the 1938 trial may have been, it cannot be relied upon as evidence for nationalism. This however is how the affair was often presented. Kolarz compared Khodzhaev to other nationalist leaders entirely on the evidence of his trial:

...a man of similar stature to Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah, President Nasser, President Bourguiba and President Soekarno (*sic*)... had Khodzhaev's political dreams materialised, he might have appeared at international conferences as the spokesman for a free country, but he faced the execution squad instead.²⁸

There is however no firm evidence that Khodzhaev aspired to any more than the modernisation of his country within the Soviet framework.

3.iv) The War Record

The record of Central Asians during the war featured early in reports of resistance to Soviet rule. Caroe devotes much space to the recruitment of Central Asians into the Wehrmacht by Kayum Khan, Nazi “Commissioner for Turkestan,” a man “endowed with the gifts of leadership and not without that singleness of purpose which enabled Jinnah to found a state in Asia not many years ago.”²⁹ The comparison implies that Caroe approves of Kayum, suggesting that double standards are being brought into play when considering the Soviet Union. It would be interesting to know whether Caroe had approved of Chandra Bose’s Indian National Army, raised against the British in the same period.

Recruitment was carried out in PoW camps, where half a million Central Asians were held with their Soviet compatriots in appalling conditions. “Those in the prison camps had it put to them ‘Either stay where you are or come and fight against Communism’.”³⁰ This seems like small choice given the conditions in which Soviet PoWs were kept by the Nazis. Mustafa Chokayev, who toured the camps with Kayum, contracted typhus in them and died in Berlin in 1941. Despite conditions in the camps the majority of prisoners preferred to stay where they were rather than fight the Soviets. Kayum succeeded, on Caroe’s count, in recruiting just 180,000 men of whom some three thousand promptly deserted to the Red Army or partizan groups. This hardly demonstrates a burning desire to fight Communism. Unlike Kayum or Chokayev the prisoners had actually lived under Soviet rule.

Monteil saw the War as being one of the great experiences binding Central Asians to the regime. Central Asians fought at Stalingrad, and although some joined the Nazis more Russians than Central Asians deserted the Red Army. In Uzbekistan alone the War produced 70 Heroes of the Soviet Union, 70,000 decorated soldiers and 15,000 workers decorated for their contribution to the war effort.³¹ Questioned by Caroe on whether the “mass desertion” to the Nazis was indicative of Central Asian attitudes towards the regime, Wheeler also denied that this was the case.³²

The War record was not merely a matter of desertion to the Nazis, however. Mass deportations were also invoked as evidence for nationalist unrest. As Conquest, who devoted twenty pages of his 1962 work to the issue, wrote,

More striking even than the Soviet inhumanity and disregard for national feelings, was the admission that these peoples had almost unanimously been dissatisfied with the much-publicised Soviet nationalities policy... The Soviet press had rightly described the Nazis as monstrous oppressors. But so little did these peoples, after twenty years' experience of Soviet rule, trust a word their rulers said that they were apparently not in the least impressed by this.³³

Conquest was writing specifically about the Chechens, but his statement is intended to be universally applicable: "[the deportations] were a test of Moscow's basic policy towards the minorities - a test in which Communism failed disastrously, and beyond all doubt."³⁴

The actual extent of Chechen collaboration with the Nazis remains in doubt, but this is not the issue here. The fact of deportation was taken by Conquest as indicative of the level of Muslim hostility to the regime and of the state's inability to control this except by the most brutal of means. However, there are two fundamental problems with this characterisation.

Firstly, the deportations did not uniquely affect Muslims, nor were all Muslims deported. While the Chechens were banished, their neighbours and close ethnic kin the Ingush remained, as did many other Caucasian Muslim groups. Koreans and Kalmuks, neither a Muslim group, also suffered deportation, as did Soviet Germans. The deportations can hardly then be said to be typical of Soviet attitudes to Muslim minorities. If the Chechens were deported for collaboration, presumably many more Muslims remained loyal to the regime and retained their ancestral territory.

The second point of note is the location to which the deportees were sent. They were banished to Central Asia. If resistance to Soviet rule were commonplace among non-Russians, it seems odd that the authorities should have chosen to exile the arch-resisters to another non-Russian area where such resistance might be expected to grow.

3.v) The Epics

Opposition to Soviet rule need not take the form of armed uprising or sabotage. The aim of the Soviet state was not merely to rule the peoples of Central Asia but “to achieve a true cultural symbiosis of all the peoples of the Union by attacking the barriers which separate the Muslims from other human groupings and most especially the Russian people, the ‘elder brother’ of the great Soviet family.”³⁵ If such a symbiosis occurred there would be a single undifferentiated Soviet nation and nationalist opposition would be meaningless. Thus preservation of cultural distinctiveness becomes a form of opposition to the regime.

Evidence that Central Asians were intent on preserving their distinctiveness was provided in detail by Bennigsen. An expert on the epic verse of the Central Asian periphery (Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan), Bennigsen paid particular attention to the epic poems indigenous to Central Asia proper. That he regarded them as especially important is shown by the fact that a quarter of his extended essay in *l’Afrique et l’Asie* (1952/53) was devoted to them.

During the War there had been a revival of traditional literary forms, and of epic poetry in particular. However in 1951 an assault was mounted against the traditional heroic epics which were closely associated with the self-perception of many Soviet Muslims. This attack made possible some measure of the strength of opposition to Soviet rule.

By the strength of the means used, by the importance of the people who took part in it and also by its violence, this last campaign is the most spectacular of all those which were carried out against Muslim intellectuals since the War; it is also that which has provoked the strongest resistance and about which we are relatively well informed.³⁶

Bennigsen traced the start of the campaign to the spring of 1951, when there was a change in attitude to the Azeri epic *Dede Korkut*. The 1949 *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* had described this as one of the “remarkable monuments of the Azeri people’s culture, [speaking of] loyalty, honesty, love for one’s homeland, courage and

heroism.”³⁷ Extracts from the poem were published in the official Anthology of Azeri Poetry and a Russian translation appeared in 1950.

On 5th May 1951 Mirza Ibrahimov declared at a congress of Azeri writers that “*Dede Korkut* has nothing in common with the Azeri people: the life, the customs it describes are foreign to them. The men of whom it sings are not the sons of our people but represent the aristocracy of foreign conquerors.” In August of the same year the Turkmen variant of the poem, *Kurkut Ata* was attacked by *Turkmenskaya Iskra* as “a bloody chronicle of the Oghuz khans, a poem of religious fanaticism, of violence and of animal hatred.” Likewise the Uzbek epic *Alpamysh*, which had been called “a pearl of Uzbek poetry,” was described in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* as “impregnated with [a] feudal and reactionary spirit, which nurtures Muslim fanaticism and preaches hatred of foreigners and infidels.” There followed a regular pattern of events.

From all the evidence these purges were part of a minutely orchestrated plan and followed a uniform pattern: the first attack is generally made by an organ in Moscow, *Pravda* or *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, more infrequently by a local paper. It is repeated by the Central Committee of the Republican Communist Party, by the various cultural institutes, trades unions, the Komsomol and local Party organisations. The operation ends with accusing the guilty native intellectuals who practise self-criticism, criticise their colleagues and promise to change their ways.³⁸

This pattern was broken in the case of the Kirghiz epic *Manas*. G. Nurov attacked the poem in the Russian-language *Sovyetskaya Kirgizya*, but rather than the new orthodoxy spreading through official organs, the cause of the poem became championed by the Kirghiz-language *Qyzyl Qyrgyzstan*. This, according to Bennigsen, was “the only [debate] of its kind in the Soviet Union.”³⁹

Bennigsen traced the argument from Professor I. Chersyuk of Frunze University’s evocation of Engels and Gorky in favour of the poem to the final denunciation of *Manas* and its supporters by the *Herald (Vestnik)* of the All-Union Academy of Sciences. “Thus concluded the *Manas* affair which for five months raised a storm in Kirghizstan the violence of which might seem astonishing if you forget that the apparently trivial question of whether a thousand-year-old work is feudal or progressive in nature in fact hides a far more serious problem, that of the survival of the

national culture of the Muslim people of Central Asia.”⁴⁰ The question of the epics pointed to an unresolved conflict between indigenous Central Asians and their Russian rulers.

The examples cited above prove that there is a conflict between the Russian authorities and the native intellectuals which is less about the place of national culture in ‘the great Soviet culture’ than about the future of national culture itself... it appears that for the Party authorities the coexistence of Soviet culture with a national culture thoroughly impregnated whether one likes it or not with Islam does not seem desirable, to impose the former you must destroy the latter or at least severely purge it.

The reactions the new cultural policy after the War met from native intellectuals indicate that these last are highly combative and have a strong will to resist. It therefore seems that for citizens of the Muslim republics of the USSR, above all for intellectuals of the younger generation, forgetting the faith of your ancestors is less distressing than abandoning your own culture.

The Soviet government, which succeeded in large part in its policy of deislamisation and which easily enough liquidated its ‘feudal’ and ‘clerical’ adversaries now faces the opposition of a social stratum which it has created itself, that of the indigenous cadre.⁴¹

This point is far from being proved on Bennigsen’s evidence. Only in Kirghizstan is there any evidence of substantial opposition to the attacks on the epics. Outside that republic Bennigsen leads us to believe that the campaign went smoothly. The idea that opposition to the changes came from Central Asians is also hard to maintain. Their names suggest that Nurov, attacking, was a Muslim and Chersyuk, defending, was not. Ibrahimov is also a Muslim name.

Bennigsen later again maintained that Central Asians were resistant to Russian literary forms, preferring to copy the subject matter and styles of Navo’i, Firdawsi and others. This claim was not substantiated. We should note too that during the 1950s, when *Manas* was under attack, the celebrated Kirghiz novelist Chingiz Aitmatov (b.1928), an agronomist by training, was a journalist for *Pravda*. This hardly argues for a rejection of Soviet cultural models by the Soviet-educated Central Asian elite.

3.vi) Elite Nationalism

The events described above might support the view that “Turkestan nationalism presents a real threat to the Soviet system... In Turkestan the ideological struggle

between the Soviets and the Russian cause on the one hand, and the Turkish cause and nationalism on the other still continues, with every party trying to succeed.”⁴²

Despite the apparently abundant evidence for opposition to Soviet rule, the fact remained that Central Asia had certainly since the War been a politically stable region. Asked why this might be, Wheeler offered the opinion that the absence in the 1950s of a discernible nationalist movement was due to two factors. Firstly,

the Russians have, particularly since the revolution, obtained such a stranglehold on this Central Asian area that it is not reasonable to expect the people to do anything about it. The only course they can follow is to be passive and as quiet as possible.⁴³

This ‘stranglehold’ was manifest in various ways. The number of Russians in the region was a major factor. According to Caroe “the degree of Russian infiltration already achieved should suffice to paralyse any Kazakh nationalist movement originating in Kazakhstan”⁴⁴

In the hypothetical case of a nationalist struggle for independence from Russia, the Russian settlers may not react too differently from their French-Algerian counterparts.⁴⁵

The presence of so many Russians within Central Asia might be expected to result in a degree of resentment, however it was conceded that, outside military service, most Central Asians were unlikely ever to encounter a Russian in the flesh.

Wheeler’s second reason for it being unlikely that a nationalist movement might develop in Central Asia was that such a movement depended on the existence of a nationalist elite. In Wheeler’s eyes, not only was such an elite lacking but it was unlikely to develop in the near future.

In order to flourish, nationalism requires some kind of indulgence on the part of the ruling power. The people of Central Asia and Transcaucasia have not been shown such indulgence in the past and it does not seem likely that it will be shown to them in the future.⁴⁶

Wheeler observed that in the case of Africa and the rest of Asia, nationalist movements had depended on the presence of native independence leaders with a degree

of freedom of speech and action, religious and cultural freedom, aid and encouragement from abroad, the existence of a native armed force distinct from the Imperial and the support of liberal opinion in the metropolis. All of these factors were lacking in Central Asia.

As long as a combination of all these circumstances and factors continues to prevail, any development of the undoubtedly existing national consciousness into active nationalism on lines familiar elsewhere can hardly be expected.⁴⁷

Concerning the possibility of a nationalist movement developing in Central Asia Wheeler had earlier written that "such a phenomenon would not be without precedent in other empires. Generally speaking, however, the present attitude is one of passive acquiescence tempered with some satisfaction with increasing material well being."⁴⁸

That this was not in itself enough to forestall a nationalist movement was precisely the point made by Seton-Watson. Russian rule could not simply be imposed however. There had to be some kind of link between rulers and ruled. Wheeler commented that "like other Imperialist regimes the Soviet administration had to rely for the implementation of its policies on the recruitment of compliant collaborators."⁴⁹ It was the attitude and actions of these 'collaborators,' the elite of Soviet Central Asian society who were in contact with the Russians and who implemented policy, which was crucial in determining the likelihood of nationalist revolt. The history of other colonial empires had shown that it was from such a Westernised elite that the leadership of independence movements came.

The treatment of the Khodzhaev trial shows that there was a belief that a nationalist elite had in the past existed. Historical works by Bennigsen and d'Encausse compared the Central Asian leadership destroyed by the Purge to Galiev and the Jadids.⁵⁰ The significance of this linkage was that in their goals, namely the modernisation of Russian Muslim society, Galiev and the Central Asian Jadids did not differ significantly from the Communists. This fact had enabled them to co-operate with the Soviets in the early years of the century. There was however a fundamental difference. Galiev and others were working from a nationalist stance. It was suggested

by Rodinson, among others, that nationalism was a necessary corollary of social modernisation. Pipes made the link explicit:

What is occurring may be described as a process of the emergence of modern nations within the Soviet Union... The practical conclusions which this evidence suggests have bearing not only on the Soviet Union but on all those areas where a nascent sense of national identity emerges simultaneously with a drive for modernisation. It is difficult to conceive how the contrary pulls implicit in modernisation... can be reconciled in any way than through the establishment of independent national states.⁵¹

As Bennigsen showed in his work on Sultan Galiev,⁵² being a Communist did not preclude being a nationalist, an understanding given a further boost by the Sino-Soviet split and the establishment of a Communist state independent of Moscow's control. Kolarz went further, contending that ultimately nationalism always came to dominate over Communism.

As Yugoslav and Albanian communism (*sic*) has already capitulated to Yugoslav and Albanian nationalism, and Russian and Chinese communism to Russian and Chinese nationalism, it is reasonable to assume that in the end communism will have to capitulate to nationalism all over the world...⁵³

Could not the Uzbek communist leaders like Mukhitdinov and Rashidov adopt the same attitude as the West African politicians, who turned their backs on Paris? It would indeed be in keeping with the whole world development if the Asian countries of the USSR would in the long run be dissatisfied with the role of the Kremlin spokesman and embark on the road of national communism.⁵⁴

This theme was repeated by Donald Carlisle, who in his review of Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay's *Islam in the Soviet Union* commented that "In the Central Asian case, it is possible that advancing socialism may even create a new stimulus for the emergence of nationalist sentiment."⁵⁵

The position of the Central Asian elite as both Communist and nationalist, and the ambivalence of that position, was described by Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay:

One can believe that, but for a few exceptions, [the new intellectuals] de-Islamised and Marxist, might also be proud of the regime's successes and credit the Party with allowing them, occasionally by coercive methods, in a single generation to leap the gap which separates a traditional semi-feudal society from a modern society. But on the other hand they also show themselves impregnated... with national sentiment, and this sometimes takes the form of

opposition to the Party line which is not without recollection of certain ideas previously held by Sultan Galiev...

Naturally it is vain to search for a direct link [*filiation*] between the Muslim intellectual companions of Sultan Galiev and their successors of today. The first were nationalists come to Communism from all sides, but remained superficially Marxists; the second are convinced Communists for whom nationalism is no more than the survival of a 'capitalist mentality' or of pre-Revolutionary bourgeois trends, but by the expression of a political and cultural particularism they differentiate themselves from their Russian comrades and sometimes also oppose them.⁵⁶

Central Asian nationalism is associated with 'particularism' on a political and cultural level, a refusal fully to integrate into a Soviet whole. Politically, one feature seemed to stand out as exemplifying this lack of integration, the tendency of Central Asian leaders to prefer their own kind in making appointments.

Kolarz referred to the fact that in February 1954 Zhumbay Shayakhmetov, who for eight years had been First Secretary of Kazakhstan, was dismissed and replaced by Panteleimon Ponomarenko and Leonid Brezhnev. According to Radio Moscow this was because Shayakhmetov had chosen staff "not on the basis of efficiency and political qualities but according to criteria of family and friendly relations and local favouritism."⁵⁷ To Kolarz this was not simply a matter of nepotism. In promoting Kazakhs over Russians Shayakhmetov was asking a question which could only occur to a nationalist: Who rules Kazakhstan, Russians or Kazakhs?

Rywkin also equated the favouring of a local cadre with nationalist sentiment:

The persistence and survival of Moslem Turkestani nationalism (sometimes called localism) is acknowledged by some of the leading Western experts in the field.⁵⁸

The equation of 'localism' with nationalism, which latter implies a political programme tending towards ethnic exclusivity and political independence, also appeared in Bennigsen's work.

The Soviet press reveals that it is in this field that conflict between Russians and natives shows itself most sharply. Thus in a work published in 1964 and devoted to the national problem in Kazakhstan, a Communist Party leader in this republic considered that one of the most dangerous manifestations of local nationalism is 'the willingness of Kazakh intellectuals to return to a new form of nationalism

(*korenizatsiya*) which comprises refusing non-Muslims places in the administrative apparatus of the republic.⁵⁹

There appears to be a confusion in this passage between 'nationalism' and 'nationalisation' as shown by the equation of 'nationalism' with *korenizatsiya*. This word which presumably appeared in the original Russian text, derives from *koren* ('root') and is related to the verb *korenizirovat* ('to place under local authority').⁶⁰ It is usually translated as 'indigenisation', referring to the early Soviet policy of involving native peoples in the administration, a sense in which Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay had already used it when they referred to "one of the dreams of the first Muslim Communists who struggled for the nationalisation (*korenizatsiya*) of positions of political leadership."⁶¹ Nationalism is a political programme calling for the creation of an independent state for a people for which the usual Russian term, *natsionalizm*, was absent from the Russian text as presented by Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay.

Arguments from the political dynamic tended to lead away from rather than towards nationalist expressions. All commentators noted that senior Central Asians had Russian deputies who could ensure a degree of conformity to directives emanating from Moscow. This did not however mean that Central Asians had no control over their republics, which might incline them to nationalism. Nove and Newth compared republican leaders to British colonial governors. Formally, these had no independent authority, being the executors of the demands of the Colonial Office in London. In fact within their own territories their opportunities for independent action were considerable. "Local Party and State officials frequently represent local vested interest... it is quite unrealistic to imagine that detailed orders in every issue can be drafted by an all-powerful, all seeing official at the centre."⁶²

Wheeler's theory was that 'homeopathic' treatment for nationalism allowed local functionaries a degree of independence sufficient to satisfy their political ambitions without compromising the Union "to give the impression that colonialism had disappeared forever."⁶³

The result of the political dispensation was that

The Central Asian republics are relieved of all responsibility in the settlement of minority and border disputes, as well as in a whole range of matters which are a constant burden to national governments elsewhere... this arrangement can be seen to have some practical advantages.⁶⁴

One advantage was gaining the benefits of gubernatorial office whilst avoiding the responsibilities.

Many of the cases of misconduct and abuse of authority were characteristic of colonial regimes where locally appointed officials do only lip service to Western methods of administration and develop a remarkable skill in adapting Western bureaucracy to their own private ends.⁶⁵

The 'private ends' of the Central Asian political elite were highlighted by Rywkin. Ironically for an author who believed in the existence of a nationalist undercurrent in Central Asia, the issues he focused on provided reasons for not following a nationalist cause.

Most of the native Muslims belonging to the Party during then 1940s were members of the socio-economic elite... These people had living standards far higher than the average and enjoyed priorities and advantages commensurate with their position. They had, one can say, a vested interest in the smooth running of the system.⁶⁶

The position of the elite depended on their fulfilling the Soviet norm. It also depended on genuine support from the masses.

It would have been very difficult to administer the area properly had the native Communists been regarded by their own people as Russian puppets... Thus the Soviet authorities, if they were to avoid serious trouble, were obliged to overlook some of the less objectionable nationalist practices.⁶⁷

The Muslim population tends to regard its own Party elite as its protectors against Russian chauvinism, the Western way of life and bureaucratic red tape. Because of this attitude, abuses and 'mutual assistance'.. have never been easy to uncover.⁶⁸

This 'mutual assistance' represents the localism associated by Rywkin and Bennigsen with nationalism. However, rather than being a reaction against the regime it can be seen as a function of the regime. Political corruption was manifest in the distribution of favours. *Blat*, the practice of patronage through unofficial channels, was endemic and was both helped by and served to preserve social links and traditional

customs. Access to resources or favours was dependent on maintaining a client-patron relationship moulded by family/clan ties and manifest in traditional behaviour towards the local Party official who himself existed in a similar relationship to his immediate superior. The centralised Soviet system meant that the ultimate source of all favours was Moscow. The elite maintained its own standing, and its privileges, by means of patronising its clients. Access to the goods to be distributed depended on compliance with the Soviet system, with the goods themselves being distributed via traditional channels. This system also had a cultural effect. If goods were distributed via traditional channels, access to them required conformity to the traditional pattern of society, particularly for lower social classes. Thus social conservatism was not a reaction against but a function of the Soviet regime.

Social conservatism, or in Bennigsen's terms 'cultural particularism', the apparent failure of Central Asian leaders to become fully assimilated into a Soviet (Russian) whole, was taken as one of the main indicators of Central Asian nationalism. This is particularly evident in the work of French and American writers who came from backgrounds in which cultural assimilation was regarded as a *sine qua non* of loyalty to the state.

Citizenship of the United States was at this time predicated on the loss of traditional cultural affinities. New immigrants were expected to attend classes where they studied not only the English language but the American constitution, American history and American cultural traditions. In Pipes' words,

Having given up many of their own traditions for the sake of modernisation, Americans and Russians are not inclined to show due respect for the traditionalism of other nations, especially when this traditionalism runs contrary to the requirements of modern life. So they tend to deprecate nationalism and advocate assimilation.⁶⁹

Pipes specifically equates failure culturally to assimilate with nationalism. Assimilation and nationalism are cast as opposites. The possibility of preserving cultural traditions without this implying rejection of the state is excluded.

Similarly, the French experience in North Africa tended to the position that cultural conformity with the norms of the metropolis implied loyalty to the state and social conservatism its opposite. The Algerian supporters of French rule were those who had adopted the most from French culture and society, were in other words the most westernised. The argument of the rebels was that cultural incompatibility entailed political incompatibility and that Algeria should thus be independent.

The British position was significantly different. Never having attempted to modify local cultures within the Empire, the British were much more willing to allow for a diversity of cultures owing loyalty to a single state. The British experience in India was the opposite of the French in Algeria. Indian nationalist leadership came from the most westernised group in society, Oxford educated and imbued with British cultural traditions.ⁱⁱ Cultural conservatism did not imply nationalism in a state which did not seek to eradicate cultural peculiarities.

While Wheeler could write that

It seems perfectly possible for a Turkmen Party member holding an important and lucrative post to be a sincere admirer and supporter of the Soviet regime, while at the same time being genuinely proud of the qualities and achievements of the Turkmen people as the mainstay of the Turkmen SSR⁷⁰

such a position was less open to French and American scholars, to whom pride in being a Turkmen and loyalty to a Russian-dominated regime seemed mutually contradictory. They therefore concentrated on the preservation of national identity as evidence for nationalism. Wheeler however made a strong contrast between the two when he wrote that “[there is] some confusion in the minds of casual students of Central Asian affairs, who imagine that such practices as child marriage and the seclusion of women are indications of nationalism”⁷¹ when they were in fact no more than indicators of cultural identity.

Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejaye appeared to concede this point when they wrote that “attachment to traditional customs... should not be regarded as evidence of

ⁱⁱ Nehru famously described himself as “the last Englishman to rule India”.

conscious opposition to the Soviet regime nor as proof of hostility towards the Russians.”⁷² On the other hand opposition was strongly to be imputed from the very preservation of such traditions:

[The elites] are strongly attached to their national culture not only in its form but in its content. They seem concerned to preserve the traditional religion and heritage even if this heritage is hardly compatible with proletarian culture; they idealise their people’s past even when it comprises a point of struggle against the Russians...

More than his predecessors in the 1920s and 1930s, the Muslim intellectual today seems - in a classic process seen in all colonial countries - to be the true representative of his people. His national conscience is at once sharper, more rational and in the last resort more hostile to Russian influence than that of all other social levels of the Muslim population.⁷³

This was written specifically with reference to elite nationalism, and seems to imply precisely that this was directed, via culture, against the Russians. A similar point is made by Hostler.

The reactions the new cultural policy after the War met from native intellectuals indicate that these last are highly combative and have a strong will to resist. It therefore seems that for citizens of the Muslim republics of the USSR, above all for intellectuals of the younger generation, forgetting the faith of your ancestors is less distressing than abandoning your own national culture.

The Soviet government, which succeeded in large part in its policy of deislamisation and which easily enough liquidated its ‘feudal’ and ‘clerical’ adversaries now faces the opposition of a social stratum which it has created itself, that of the indigenous cadre.⁷⁴

Cultural considerations played an important part in determining the attitude of the ‘intermediary intelligentsia’, as Bennigsen and d’Encausse called them, to the regime. Cultural attitudes could be used as a measure of whether this elite had become fully Sovietised, or remained essentially nationalistic in outlook.

This is particularly evident in the work of French writers. For Bennigsen the preservation of Central Asian languages was vital to the possibility of a nationalist movement. The study of language use and the extent to which indigenous languages had become Russified comprises a major portion in the body of his work. As the French language and French identity were linked to the extent that a non-Francophone could not be regarded as truly French, so it was possible to determine how Sovietised a people had become by studying the degree to which Russian had supplanted local

languages. Linguistic Russification would both diminish the distinction between Central Asians and other Soviet citizens and increase the distinction between them and the rest of the Muslim world: “[linguistic Russification] is regarded by the Soviet authorities as one of the best ways of isolating the Muslim peoples of the Union from their co-religionists abroad.”⁷⁵

Conversely, opposition to language change implied an unwillingness to abandon traditional modes of expression and traditional culture and to adopt Russian modes of expression. This was taken as indicative of a degree of nationalism. According to Bennigsen such opposition was strong, and it evinced more than simple linguistic conservatism, although he gives no information as to how widespread or popular it was. “The opposition went far beyond the mere defence of ‘archaisms’, since the ‘reactionary nationalists imbued with pan-Islamic and pan-Iranian ideology’ tried to prevent any borrowings from Russia by fabricating new words such as *torikiston* for cinema.”⁷⁶

According to Wheeler in a reference to an unnamed study by Richard Pipes which related to other areas where ‘backwards’ groups had come into contact with the West, the usual pattern of development was for the upper classes to acquire the imperial language whilst local languages gradually developed as modern media. The Soviet government, whilst approving the former supposedly resisted the latter, but “there is no evidence to indicate that the Soviet regime actually succeeds in hindering the development of native languages; on the contrary, all signs point to a remarkable ability of the local languages to survive in the face of strong pressures.”⁷⁷

Language provided just one example of the way in which Central Asians were maintaining their distinctness from Russians. Others included family structure,⁷⁸ historiography, literature⁷⁹ and education. That cultural differences between Russians and Central Asians were not perceived as being a question of ‘Socialist in form, national in content’ is shown by Kolarz’s contention that “the nationalism of the non-Russian peoples in the face of persecution is always finding new forms of camouflage, particularly by escaping into the cultural field.”⁸⁰

3.vii) Conclusion

There was in the West a reluctance to admit to any degree of co-operation by Central Asians in the Soviet system, as is manifest in Hostler's work. He automatically mistrusted any evidence that Russians and Muslims were working together, ascribing shows of loyalty to the state to dissimulation. Of Gasprinsky he wrote "Most probably his pro-Russian writings were a manifestation of his tactics: to pretend to be friendly with the Russians, and to pay this price for a degree of freedom."⁸¹ Similarly, of the 1905 All-Muslim Congress which called for greater autonomy within the Russian Empire he claimed "This accent of loyalty was dictated by tactical reasons since the Tatars were afraid to speak openly of their pan-Turkist programme."⁸²

The idea that apparent loyalty to the regime may be no more than a mask was also found in Allworth's work when he wrote

Politically, around 1930 the resistance through intellectual activity had earned most literary and national figures the ugly label *opasiz* (Kazakh) *eki juzduu* (Kirghiz) or *ikijuzlamachi* (Uzbek), each signifying a 'two-faced person' but carrying a political connotation 'a nationalist who hides his true hostility while opposing the Party'.⁸³

There were reasons why an apparent willingness to co-operate with the Russians did not imply a Machiavellian attitude to politics. Nove and Newth observed that the political dynamic in Central Asia was quite different from that obtaining in other Western empires, chiefly by dint of the fact that under the Soviet system there was a high degree of latitude in both political and cultural matters. They noted that for a French African to become a political force it was necessary for him culturally to assimilate with France. However, in the Soviet Union the situation was quite different.

Because Algeria, unlike the Soviet republics, had no political hierarchy of its own, politically ambitious Algerians had little alternative to turning to subversive forms of nationalism.⁸⁴

By contrast, in the Soviet Union each republic had its own hierarchy through which the politically ambitious could climb. Kolarz recorded that the presidency of any given republic was usually given to a member of the titular nationality. Achieving the

highest office was not accomplished despite one's nationality but because of it. Republican presidents, Kolarz conceded, sat on the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and therefore directed not only republican but Union policy.

The argument for nationalism from purely political motives had severe weaknesses. Despite this, the expectation of a nationalist current in Central Asia was great. Although such a current was not immediately evident it was assumed to have been subsumed or internalised within a cultural milieu. The locus of national identity and of national resistance as defined in cultural terms came to be associated with Islam as the carrier of a non-Russian culture, and it is to this that I shall next turn.

¹ **Wheeler** (1960b) p.62

² **Menken** (1954) p.36

³ **Caroe** (1953) p.100

⁴ **Eickelman** (1981) Chapter 6 pp126-150

⁵ **Caroe** (1953) p.101

⁶ **Hostler** (1957) p.165

⁷ **Hayit** (1956) p.173

⁸ *ibid.* p.200

⁹ *ibid.* p.201

¹⁰ **Bennigsen** (1952) p.22

¹¹ **Olcott** (1987) pp.133 *ff*

¹² **Conquest** (1962) p.25

¹³ quoted *ibid.* p.25

¹⁴ **Gafurov & Pokhranov** The Tadjik People in the Fight for the Freedom and Independence of the Motherland; Stalinabad 1944 p.179 quoted *ibid.* p.25

¹⁵ **Shahrani, M.** *Statebuilding and Social Fragmentation in Afghanistan* in **Banuazizi, A. & Weiner, M.** *The State, Religion and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan*; Syracuse University Press, Syracuse NY 1986 p.50

¹⁶ **Rywkin** (1963)

¹⁷ *ibid.* p.57

¹⁸ *ibid.* p.47

¹⁹ **Wheeler** (1960b) p.17

²⁰ *ibid.* p.62

²¹ **Wheeler** (1966) p.76

²² **Conquest** (1962) p.27

²³ quoted (unsourced) *ibid.* p.27

²⁴ **Maclean** (1949 & 1991) p.83, 1991 edition.

²⁵ *ibid.* p.89

²⁶ *ibid.* pp.90/91

²⁷ *ibid.* p.113

²⁸ **Kolarz** (1964) p.59

²⁹ **Caroe** (1953) p.243

³⁰ *ibid.* p.248

³¹ **Monteil** (1952) p.84

³² **Wheeler** (1960a) p.24

³³ **Conquest** (1962) pp.48/49

³⁴ *ibid.* p.68

³⁵ **Bennigsen** (1953) No.21 p.13

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- ³⁶ *ibid.* p.29
³⁷ *ibid.* No.22 p.22
³⁸ *ibid.* p.25
³⁹ *ibid.* p.26
⁴⁰ *ibid.* p.30
⁴¹ *ibid.* p.31
⁴² Hayit (1956) p.132
⁴³ Wheeler (1960a) p.105
⁴⁴ Caroe (1953) p.171
⁴⁵ Rywkin (1963) p.81
⁴⁶ Wheeler (1960a) p.105
⁴⁷ Wheeler (1966) p.114
⁴⁸ Wheeler (1960b) p.62
⁴⁹ Wheeler (1966) p.74
⁵⁰ d'Encausse (1966); Bennigsen & Lemer cier-Quelquejay (1960)
⁵¹ *ibid.* p.6
⁵² Bennigsen (1957) & Bennigsen & Lemer cier-Quelquejay (1960)
⁵³ Kolarz (1964) p.15
⁵⁴ *ibid.* p.130
⁵⁵ Carlisle (1967) p.134
⁵⁶ Bennigsen & Lemer cier-Quelquejay (1960) p.197
⁵⁷ Radio Moscow 12/1/54 cited Kolarz (1964) p.44
⁵⁸ Rywkin (1963) p.106
⁵⁹ Bennigsen & Lemer cier-Quelquejay (1968) p.224
⁶⁰ Oxford Russian Dictionary (1993)
⁶¹ Bennigsen & Lemer cier-Quelquejay (1968) p.222
⁶² Nove & Newth (1967) p.36
⁶³ Wheeler (1964) p.127
⁶⁴ *ibid.* p.233
⁶⁵ *ibid.* p.144
⁶⁶ Rywkin (1963) p.114
⁶⁷ *ibid.* p.106
⁶⁸ Rywkin (1964) p.13
⁶⁹ Pipes (1964) p.3
⁷⁰ Wheeler (1964) p.153
⁷¹ Wheeler (1966) p.98
⁷² Bennigsen & Lemer cier-Quelquejay (1968) p.235
⁷³ *ibid.* p.233
⁷⁴ Bennigsen (1953) No.22 p.31
⁷⁵ Bennigsen (1958) p.25
⁷⁶ *ibid.* p.31
⁷⁷ *ibid.* p.37
⁷⁸ *c.f.* Bennigsen (1959)
⁷⁹ Allworth (1964)
⁸⁰ Kolarz (1964) p.40
⁸¹ Hostler (1957) p.127
⁸² *ibid.* p.133
⁸³ Allworth (1967) p.415
⁸⁴ Nove & Newth (1967) p.125

Chapter 4: Writing on Islam - The 1950s

4.i) Introduction

The early debates on Central Asia's colonial status all but ignored religious issues. Hostler says little about Islam except to link it to pan-Turkic sentiment:

The unusual character of nationalist trends in Russia is reflected in their strong mutual interdependence. They have blended into an amalgam of pan-Islamic, national-Turkish and pan-Turkish movements. This fusing of Turkism and Islam in Russia is profound and natural, and is based on the palpable fact that the Russian Muslims are 90% Turks, and more than 90% of the Turks of Russia are Muslims.¹

In an article in *Problems of Communism*² Pipes devoted one out of ten pages to religious issues although these received prominence in his conclusion. Consideration of Soviet aspirations in the Middle East demanded that at least some attention be paid to Soviet Islam:

The increased interest now being overtly shown by the Soviet government in the Middle East makes the study of the Soviet attitude towards Islam of particular importance. It seems that the Soviet authorities may experience some difficulty in reconciling the uncompromising hostility which they have so far shown towards the practise of Islam [with foreign policy goals].³

Many of those writing on Central Asia were not Islamists or students of religion but political analysts and civil servants. Their attitudes towards Islam reflected this. Egretaud remarked that

Some people worry about the position of religion in Central Asia. In this field more than any other the judgements set out by most foreign observers are contradictory and lacking in objectivity, as they are seldom independent of the opinions of their authors on the religious problem.⁴

In the United States the level of understanding of Islam left much to be desired. Pipes referred to “the spring festival of Ramadan.”⁵ⁱ Park wrote “Islam is a syncretic religion”⁶ without further expanding.

British and French writers were less prone to this kind of comment, but attitudes varied between the two countries in reflection of their differing experiences of Muslim societies. In British writings there was an awareness that the ascriptive term ‘Muslim’ referred not only to a religious attitude but to a cultural identity which did not assume any degree of devotion. Caroe and Wheeler were familiar with the concept of the secular Muslim and with ‘Muslim’ political activity based on cultural rather than religious identity. For them the question as whether Central Asias were still Muslim in a religious sense was irrelevant. To be Muslim did not demand any degree of devotion. This understanding is implicit in Egretaud’s criticism of French scholarship.

France took the religious question in the Soviet Union more seriously. It was from French scholars that the bulk of writing on Soviet Islam came in the 1950s. Monteil related the Soviet Muslim experience to Algeria and Senegal, explaining Islam both as a barrier to assimilation into a single Soviet whole and as a possible focus of resistance.

Bennigsen and d’Encausse made the greatest contributions to the study of Soviet Islam. Their scholarship was to have a lasting impact. Both were familiar with the Muslim world and largely sympathetic towards Muslim society. However, their discussion could be said to fall foul of Egretaud’s criticism that

Specialists of ‘French Documentation’ superbly [refer to] the ‘Muslim Republics of the USSR’. Probably these assiduous readers of the Central Asian press are more Muslim than the Muslims, since in my experience, many modern states which pay lip-service to Islam choose a less radical definition of it.⁷

Again we face the problem of what is understood by ‘Muslim’. In English the term was often used without religious connotations. In French the linguistic situation was more complex. Monteil’s *Essai sur l’Islam en URSS* was not primarily concerned

ⁱ It is impossible to determine whether Pipes is referring to Ramadan which falls in different seasons in different years or the ‘Persian New Year’, *Naw-ruz*, which falls annually on 21st March.

with religion whereas Bennigsen devoted the first quarter of his *Les peuples musulmans de l'URSS et les Soviets* to this issue. In English usage the distinction between 'Muslim' as a cultural signifier and 'Islam' as a religion was more apparent.

Confusion between Islam as a faith and Islam as a social identity accounted somewhat for the different emphases placed on the religion by British and French writers. While Wheeler denied that political movements in Islamic garb were religious movements and Caroe specifically stated that the 1898 Andijan revolt was not religiously inspired⁸ this option was less readily available to French authors for whom no clear distinction could be made between the social and the religious. Monteil described the Algerian war as "this 'critical time between France and Islam'"⁹ and in a footnote called for "the civil and social equality promised to Islam by France in Algeria in 1830 and again in 1947." Monteil uses the terms 'Islam' and 'Muslims' as synonymous not terms for a religion and a group of people respectively. In this respect the French position is probably closer to the conceptual view of many Muslims than the British. This attitude tends towards ascribing a political aspect to the religious and a religious attitude to the political which need not be present.

The view presented by French scholars at the end of the decade, that Islam existed as an undercurrent divorced from or hostile to accepted Soviet norms, remained a minority opinion. The prevailing attitude was that secular influences were stronger than religious, as appeared to be the case in the rest of the Muslim world. Halpern wrote

secular events rather than Islam will determine whether such a development [of new social organisations] is accompanied by a pro-Soviet, pro-Western, or neutral orientation.¹⁰

4.ii) Wheeler

Geoffrey Wheeler (1897-1990) was one of the two principal British scholars of Central Asia of the 1950s and 1960s. The son of an infantry officer, in 1915 he joined the Queen's West Surrey Regiment, and in 1918 was seconded to the Indian Army. Between 1919-1925 he was attached to General Staff (Intelligence), covering India,

Palestine and Malta. In 1926 he became UK Military Attaché in Mashhad. In the 1930s he was posted to Baluchistan and the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh), joining the (Indian) External Affairs Department in 1940. In 1946 he returned to the British Mission to Iran as both Press and Oriental Councillor, before being returned to London in 1950. In 1953 he left government service and founded the Central Asian Research Centre which he ran until 1968, editing a journal, *Central Asia Review*, which provided a digest of the regional Soviet press.

Wheeler's 1954¹¹ exposition of Soviet Islam came in the context of what he called 'cultural developments' and lays its principle stress on Islam as a social force rather than an institution. Islam appears as a kind of social glue binding the peoples of Central Asia to one another. This did not mean that Soviet Muslims should necessarily be considered as part of any wider Muslim society.

It would be a mistake to regard the people of Central Asia, or even of each nationality, as part of a corporate Muslim identity... Nevertheless, in so far as there exists any social and even political bond among the peoples of Central Asia other than those of race, traditional language and culture it is probably Islam. That the Soviet authorities are aware of this bond and of the resentment felt by the people at being cut off from the rest of the Muslim world is shown by their constant denunciation of such international movements as pan-Islamism, pan-Turanianism and the sect of Sufism.¹²

Although this passage might seem to imply that Islam had political weight in Central Asia, Wheeler was cautious.

It is often asserted that Islam is still a living force among the peoples of Central Asia, that it sustains them in their enforced subjugation to the Soviet regime and that in certain circumstances it would unite them in achieving real independence. I do not myself know how far this is true today, but it might be unwise to take it for granted that Islam is any more ingrained in the hearts and minds of the peoples of Central Asia than it is in other parts of the Muslim world where the practise of Islam is not discouraged but where it has failed to withstand the advance of westernisation and where so-called religious movements are often disclosed as being political movements in disguise... [it is possible that] the Russians regard Islam less as an ideological opponent than as an obstacle to the establishment of Russian cultural and political dominance.¹³

4.iii) Caroe

Olaf Caroe (1892-1981), born of a Scottish mother and a Danish father, was the second of the great British scholars of Central Asia. He too joined the Queen's West Surrey Regiment, a year before Wheeler, and was immediately sent to India where he fought the Afghans. In 1919 he joined the India Civil Service, being based between 1923-1937 on the North-West Frontier, a period when tribesmen of the Afridi and Waziri clans were in revolt against British rule. During this time Caroe was awarded the Commander of the Indian Empire Medal. In 1939 he became Foreign Secretary in Delhi, and in 1946 Governor of the North-West Frontier. In 1947, on decolonisation, he was retired against his wishes. Between 1951-1953 he ran the self-founded Turkological Centre, and in his 1951 book *Wells of Power* coined the term 'Northern Screen' as a reference to the role of Turkey, Iran and Pakistan as buffers against Soviet expansion south. This later became the 'Northern Tier' doctrine, which seems to have influenced Hostler.

Caroe ascribed a more active role to Islam than Wheeler although his conception of the religion was more romantic:

a sedentary oasis population is particularly prone to the excesses of a morose clericalism such as flourished in Transoxiana... it is true in the broad to say that one of the essential differences of Persian and Turk is visible in the attitude of each to religion - an excessive formalism susceptible to the fanatical appeal set against an easy nonchalance which may indeed recognise the immanence of God but sees him more clearly upon the mountain than within the mosque.¹⁴

In his eyes "in terms of ultimate ideologies, the question is one of the faith which shall prevail in the end, Communism or Islam,"¹⁵ casting the two as mutually antagonistic ideologies. There seemed much evidence that Communism was not prevailing in its opposition to Islam:

While the modern nationalists cannot sufficiently condemn the clerics... they are forced to admit, with a deep sense of emotion, that Islam lives on in the hearts of the people, far beyond the precincts of the mosque. As a Kazakh said in Mecca: 'Since we have no mosques, no official clergy and no institutions that the Communists can abuse, this means that they can do nothing with us.' It may be that the whole of Turkistan will come to Islam in this sense.¹⁶

Caroe did not explain what 'sense' of Islam he had in mind, but he cited a complaint made by the Kazakh Shaykhakhmetov in a Christmas speech to the Komsomol in 1951 to the effect that religious practise was alive, and concluded that

Under Bolshevik pressure, religious institutions have forever lost their old meaning and force... Yet Islam, cleansed of its theocratic accretions, lives as a spiritual possession in the hearts of the people... In fact Islam has become the spiritual core of the nationalist political creed.¹⁷

This sits uneasily with his earlier assertion that

[Islam may be] dismissed as a political force... [while] it is possible to speak in moving terms of Islam in the hearts of the people, far beyond the confines of the mosque or the conceptions of the *ulema*, as a political watchword it is regarded by the new nationalism as a mirage of imperialists.¹⁸

4.iv) Monteil

For the French scholar Monteil Soviet Islam was intimately bound up with the colonial question and much of what he had to say about the religion was connected with this. This is due in part to his view of Islam as being not merely a religion but a nexus of civilisational attitudes shared by people of a common cultural tradition irrespective of their level of religious practise. Islam can be as much an ethnic as a religious marker.

At the beginning of his essay, Monteil notes that "it could be said that Soviet Islam is, by 4/5, a *Turkish* Islam."¹⁹ The connexion between national and religious identity is made from the outset. Religious expression inevitably has elements of the national within it, and national feeling may be expressed via religion. It is primarily Islam or the Islamic elements of Central Asian society which differentiate the Turkic peoples of the Soviet Union from the Slavic majority. As evidence for this Monteil quotes O. Yusupov, General Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party: "Islam is the mother of the Uzbek people."²⁰

Whilst in Caroe's eyes Islam and Communism could only be mutually antagonistic, Monteil noted that a 1942 Baku conference proclaimed the two were not

incompatible. Referring to Ivan IV's forced conversion of the Tatars, Monteil concluded that Russian persecution of Islam was not a purely Bolshevik preserve, nor had the Bolsheviks been uniformly hostile to the religion. Monteil contended that relations between Soviet Communism and Islam had passed through five distinct phases. The years 1917-1920 represented a period of religious freedom and political autonomy followed from 1920-1928 by continued relative tolerance of religion as an ally against 'feudalism' tempered by the fact that many 'feudal' practises had become associated with religious demands. 1928-1938 saw acute conflict arising from the struggle against pan-Turkism followed by détente during the War, giving way in Stalin's final years to violent attacks on 'deviations', of which religion was one. Explaining this apparent inconsistency in policy, Monteil patronisingly wrote "We must not lose sight of the fact that we are in Asia, and that Cartesian logic does not hold in this country either among the Russians or the Turks."²¹

That Islam and Communism need not be antagonistic was revealed in a single statement: "it has been said and freely written that Communist evangelism appeals to a basic tendency in Islam, which is *anti-capitalist*."²² Despite the shortage of accurate information about Soviet Islam, Monteil was in no doubt that some form of *modus vivendi* had been worked out between the religious authorities and the state. This was illustrated by the fact that *fatwas* were issued in support of such government policies as land reform, and by the existence of four Spiritual Directorates, of which Monteil gave the locations as well as naming their heads. He further claimed that at 44,732 the number of registered 'ulema was four times the combined total of Rabbis and Orthodox priests.

The position of Islam could not be measured solely by the situation of the 'ulema. According to Monteil

In Muslim society it is possible to distinguish *laity* - in other words the bulk of believers - from *clergy*, understanding that here it implies only 'religious people' in the vague sense of the word, characterised above all by their Islamic culture.²³

The distinction is not clear, but it seems that Monteil is attempting to differentiate between those who are professionally involved with religion (he draws attention to the

Russian word *dukhovnik* which literally means a Father Confessor in the Christian sense but was used in Central Asia as a term for any religious functionary) and the mass of people.

These seemed to have an ambivalent attitude towards religion. On the one hand, there were ostensible atheists who held government posts. In 1949, of 83 members of the Central Committee of the Uzbek Communist Party, 57 were Central Asians. On the other hand there was evidence for the continuation of religious practice throughout society. *Kyzyl Uzbekistan* (24/6/50) had reported Young Pioneers praying, and being ignorant of Communist songs. Further, "it is probable that many Muslims continue to regard as illegitimate any child born of a marriage at which a *mullah* has not presided."²⁴ Later Monteil noted that "even 'atheists' are circumcised, get married in the mosque and are buried in Muslim cemeteries."²⁵

The reason for the observance of religious customs Monteil gives as hatred towards the Russians. Unbelief he claimed led to deracination which was to be avoided.

It might be questioned, with Egretaud, whether such customs actually indicated religious life.

it occurs that one commits obvious errors in including traditional customs which are 'religious' in name only. Contrary to what is currently thought, experienced theologians refuse to consider circumcision, refusal to consume pork or fermented drinks, wearing a veil... as religious imperatives... if the Muslim religion has been linked with these customs because of certain historical circumstances, their disappearance does not mean that the religion has disappeared with them... equally, the survival of these customs is not a criterion for judging religious feeling.²⁶

It would be interesting to know who these 'experienced theologians' were, but Egretaud's remains a serious point, although taken to its logical conclusion it would appear by this argument to be impossible to write about religious belief. Monteil mentions two phenomena which are specifically religious in nature.

The first was pilgrimage. Hajj was impossible for the majority, although since the war limited numbers had been able to travel to Mecca. This did not stop the practice of pilgrimage, since “they all have their holy places, venerated tombs which traditionally the faithful visited to pray.”²⁷ Monteil named some sites, including the ‘Throne of Solomon’ which people visited to cure mental illness and sterility in women and to seek a cure for blindness from the nearby holy well. This was not the exclusive preserve of superstitious villagers, as shown by a 1952 complaint in *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* to the effect that even members of the Alma-Ata Academy of Sciences made pilgrimages.

Secondly, Monteil wrote “one point on which much light has been cast is the question of *congregations* or Muslim religious brotherhoods (*ishan*), whose importance in some countries, North Africa for instance, is known.”²⁸

The ‘brotherhoods’ had been abolished in 1921 and Monteil was unsure whether they were still extant. By 1957 he was more certain. There were “some thousands of dervishes... above all Naqshbandis and Qadiris according to Soviet sources - which have not the slightest interest in exaggerating the significance of the brotherhoods.”²⁹ Monteil estimated that 7.5% of Soviet Muslims were members of dervish groups. He remained cautious though. Whilst Carrère d’Encausse claimed that dervish groups “are actually mass organisations, totally alienated from the ideology of the Soviet system,” Monteil asked “does she not arrive at this opinion rather quickly from partial and incomplete figures?”³⁰

Monteil’s own change of attitude towards dervishism resulted partly as a consequence of the work of Hayit, Bennigsen and d’Encausse. It is of importance that he made an initial comparison with North Africa, where dervish movements had shown themselves difficult to control and had a history of spearheading political opposition to European control.

An important aspect of dervishism is illustrated by another comparison with Africa. In a short section, Monteil followed Charles Monteil (no relation) in suggesting that traditional society had much in common with Communism in that there was a highly developed system of collective ownership. This ‘Communism’ had a religious

specifically Sufi basis. “Among the Islamicised Blacks there is a collectivist organisation in which the ancient Sudanese Communism is transformed by the intervention of Islam, itself assimilated. This is the sect of murids...”³¹ This phenomenon was also observable in Senegal. The significance of dervish-inspired ‘Islamic Communism’ lay in its compromise between the attractiveness of Communist teaching and traditional cultural norms. Applied to Central Asia a synthesis of this kind could provide a means of being a Communist without becoming subsumed into Russian-dominated culture. A Central Asian dervish might support the goals of Communism without supporting the means. By implication support for, and assistance in implementing, Soviet policy did not demand acquiescence in the regime or with the norms of Soviet life. Although it is not entirely clear from his text, it is possible that it is this which Monteil had in mind when he wrote that “there undoubtedly exists within the USSR (and certainly within Muslim émigré circles), a middle way, at once progressive and anti-Soviet.”³²

Concluding, Monteil stated that although public life had become de-Islamicised private faith persisted. The significance of this was difficult to determine. “We do not fully understand [Islam’s] precise situation. True it exists, it has come to terms with the regime, but at what price? It does not govern society, nor morals, nor public affairs.”³³ The degree to which Islam may have come to terms with its secondary role in society, and the diversity within Soviet Islam itself is illustrated in two passages. In the first, Monteil makes a statement and then poses a question which is partially answered by the second.

It is a fact that there are Muslim Communists: in 1946 the head of the Soviet party of pilgrims to Mecca received, when passing through Cairo, the coveted degree of Doctor of Theology. What about militant Communists like Osman Yusupov, General Secretary of the Uzbek Communist Party, to what extent are they still Muslims?³⁴

Let us take two young people (aged 29) who have emigrated to Paris. One is Kirghiz, the other Kazakh. The one comes from an old family and was a soldier in 1941. The other is a factory hand. The first, who left the *Komsomol* in 1939 is detribalised and completely unreligious. But he retains the feeling of membership of the Muslim community, the *Ummah*, and this guides all his attitudes: on the Palestinian question for example. The other, the Kazakh, owns a pocket-sized Qur’an in Arabic, printed in Bulgaria and protected by a gilded metal box which he keeps safely by his heart.³⁵

4.v) Hayit

Hayit's *Turkestan im XX. Jahrhundert* was welcomed since in the words of Carrère d'Encausse "effectively nothing has been published in Western Europe on Russian Islam save Professor von Mende's own work,"ⁱⁱ the *Essai sur l'Islam en URSS* of Vincent Monteil and a few isolated articles dealing with problems since the war."³⁶ Hayit's work focused on Soviet colonialism rather than on Islam *per se*, however on the subject of religion Hayit made a number of interesting claims which were to find echoes in later writing.

Unlike most other émigrés, Baymirza Hayit (b.1917) had actually lived under Soviet rule. He was born in the Ferghana Valley, traditionally one of the most devout regions of Central Asia, and was strongly influenced by Jadid ideas having studied under Abdurrauf Fitrat. He rose to a senior position in the Uzbekistan Ministry of Culture. Emigrating to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, Hayit quickly made a name for himself as an authoritative eye-witness to developments of the 1920s-1930s.

Hayit's starting point was to characterise Islam as being fundamentally in opposition to Soviet rule: "The ideas of Communism stand in opposition to those of Islam."³⁷ Any apparent Soviet tolerance of the religion should be seen as flannel to deceive newly independent Asian countries.

While Islam was attacked from within the country, outside there was talk of 'Islamic brotherhood' and 'the common aim of Communism and Islam'. Current Soviet policy on Islam does not aim for reconciliation but must be seen as a trap for those Islamic nations burdened with social and national problems.³⁸

The incompatibility of Communism and Islam meant that rather than being able to evolve a system of compromise the two were doomed to a constant struggle which from the side of Islam had to take place outside the law: "whereas up to 1929 Islam carried out an open struggle against Communism and Soviet power, since 1929 it has

ⁱⁱ *Der nationale Kampf der Rußland Turken*, Berlin 1936

had to carry out an illegal struggle.”³⁹ Thus Hayit equates the practise of Islam with political opposition.

In Hayit’s eyes, Islam formed the essence of Central Asian being, and the essence of Central Asian Islam was dervishism: “Islam formed the world- and life-view of Turkestanis, their character and their thought... Turkestan was a land of Islamic dervishism.”⁴⁰ An assault on traditional Central Asian culture entailed an attack on an Islam whose essence was in dervishism and which would resist via that form.

Nineteenth century accounts of Central Asia make frequent reference to dervishism, usually as evidence for the decline of Central Asian culture and civilisation. Hayit suggested that this branch of Islam survived and was spreading, and that this represented not the moribundity of Central Asian culture but its resilience in the face of the Communist threat.

Hayit listed four orders of dervishes as being active in Central Asia; the Naqshibandiyya, Qadiriya, Kubrawiyya and Kalendariyya. The prevalence of dervishism was illustrated by the fact that in 1935 thirty-two people had been arrested in Kokand for the performance of the *zikr*. Furthermore,

From 1934 to 1935 the clergy organised a religious activity among the population in order to revive the spiritual dynamics of Islam. They formed groups of five to six people and sent them from village to village and from town to town. These groups would mingle with the people riding hobby-horses [*Stekenpferden*], wearing turbans and colourful clothes, and in Turkestan they were generally known as ‘riding Ishans’ (atliq eshanlar). At public meetings they would read Suras from the Qur’an and would start to move rhythmically in the dervish fashion under the *zikr*. Some from the audiences would join them. Thus the groups grew in number and enlisted new members. Soviet organs would call these people ‘madmen’ and would initially not credit them with any political importance.⁴¹

Hayit presents a widespread, organised movement. That the authorities did not “initially” credit this with political importance implies that later they did and indeed that it had such importance. This is significant when it is taken into account that although the ‘ulema, in the shape of Mufti Babakhan, had greatly impressed the French colonial officer General Tubert and through him Montiel, Hayit dismisses Babakhan as a

nonagenarian who could not even speak Arabic. Such an 'ulema could not hope to preserve Islam. This was evident in that although Islam "remained resistant, its public appearance within society was lost."⁴²

The importance of dervishism lay in that it had no requirement for a public appearance to survive. Adepts referred to themselves as "Komsomol in this world, Murid in the next." Hayit has introduced an important distinction. Islam survived not in its public institutions but as an underground dynamic movement of opposition.

Having said that, Hayit was cautious in his assessment of the future of Soviet Islam.

It is difficult to see whether Islam can continue to exist or whether it will be removed completely from the minds of younger generations... it is equally difficult to see whether the spirit of Islam in its struggle for survival will shape itself to adapt to modern times or whether it will keep its old form.⁴³

It appears that for Hayit the survival of Soviet Islam depends on the 'adaptability' of its 'spirit', something which would appear to be precluded in the case of the 'ulema. All Hayit's evidence points to innovation and genuine spirituality being the preserve of dervishism. If Islam was to remain strong, its strength lay here.

4.vi) Pipes

Wheeler compared Monteil's and Bennigsen's early work on Islam to that of Richard Pipes, an American scholar who was particularly concerned with the Soviet political system and the position of minorities within this. "Dr Pipes being less pessimistic about the survival of Islam than the two French writers."⁴⁴ Whereas the first two had been reliant on printed Soviet sources, Pipes gained his information from refugees whom he interviewed in the United States in 1953. His findings were initially published in the *Middle East Journal* in 1955 and in *Problems of Communism* in 1957.

Pipes linked the life or death of Islam to the colonial question, suggesting that the loss of Islamic distinctiveness would be a precursor to assimilation and

Russification/Sovietisation. The maintenance of cultural distinctiveness evinced by following Islamic precepts implied opposition. Whether assimilation or resistance was occurring was the heart of his essay. An accurate picture was difficult to arrive at, but Pipes made his view clear.

Some scholars feel that most of the minorities in the Soviet Union are gradually succumbing to Russification and losing their national identity in favour of a new 'Soviet' nationality. Others, among them the author of this essay, hold the opposite view and maintain that under the crust of assimilation and cultural *Gleichschaltung* virile national movements are taking shape. The evidence for either viewpoint is scanty and inadequate.⁴⁵

Using the information he gained, Pipes drew conclusions about the development of Central Asian society. Regarding Islam, "In general, under the extreme pressure of Soviet policy, Islam in Central Asia seems to have undergone in a single generation the process of 'secularisation', a process well known in western religious experience."⁴⁶ This did not imply Russification however, since "only those features of Russian culture which accord with the Muslim society's general historical evolution - that is to say, those which tend towards Westernisation - seem to make a lasting impact."⁴⁷

The secularisation of Central Asian society was one which would in any case have occurred. It did not imply support for Soviet policies, still less did it suggest that those policies, which Pipes characterised as being a drive to enforce Russian/Soviet hegemony, had been successful. This was, ironically in view of Pipes' characterisation of Central Asian society as secular, borne out in the field of religion, which was the prime carrier of local cultural exclusivity.

While religious 'survivals of the past' are reported throughout the territory of the USSR, they would appear to be most firmly rooted in the Muslim republics... The Communists have long waged a struggle against Islam in these republics; despite a certain success among the rising generation, they have run into innumerable ancestral habits and a religious fervour which still resists them... To the extent that the press campaign reflects the actual persistence of superstition the Communists provide another instance of the failure of their ideology to fulfil man's complex needs.⁴⁸

The greatest of these Pipes implies is a spiritual one. This attitude might sound odd to European ears, but in a society as religious as the United States such a position would seem natural. Communism, a materialist doctrine, is anti-spiritual. It follows

that a spiritually ordered life, and in the Protestant United States religious behaviour is understood as being spiritually rather than socially motivated, is an anti-Communist life.

If religious influences are merely 'survivals of the past' among the old, what is to explain the revival of interest among young people?...

The answer is in part the tenacity of faith itself, in part the natural reaction of peoples who have known little but suffering and privation... [religion] in a sense constitute[s] an act of revolt - a revolt against the oppressiveness of Soviet life, against the dry and repetitive dogmas of 'Leninism-Stalinism.'⁴⁹

This theme of religious behaviour as a reaction to the spiritual nullity of Communism was taken up and developed in later decades. Evidence of religious activity was provided by Bennigsen.

4.vii) Bennigsen

Alexandre Bennigsen (b. St Petersburg 1913, d. Paris 1988) was the most important scholar in the field of Central Asian Studies during the period examined in this thesis. It has been said that he "virtually single-handedly created the field of Russian Islam in the post-1945 period as one meriting serious study."⁵⁰ Bennigsen is the most frequently cited of all Western scholars and has a legitimate claim to being "one of [Central Asian Studies'] greatest pioneers and scholars."⁵¹

Bennigsen's father was a Colonel of the Russian Imperial Horse Guards who fought against the Bolsheviks during the Civil War. In 1919 Bennigsen and his mother, who like his father was of German ancestry, were evacuated to Constantinople his father joining them the following year. Bennigsen lived with his grand-parents in Tallinn (Reval) until the family joined the Russian diaspora in Paris in 1924. Completing his education in Paris he went to the Cavalry school in Saumur, leaving in 1939 as a lieutenant. Just before the German occupation of Paris, Bennigsen married another Baltic-German émigré, Hélène von Bildering, whose father Baron Paul, had been executed by the Bolsheviks.

During the War Bennigsen was active in the Resistance. Although his parents were arrested by the Gestapo, neither he nor his wife were. Their daughter Marie was born in 1944.

After the War Bennigsen followed a family tradition of learning non-European languages, studying Persian, Turkish and Kurdish. Additionally he held a post at the *Préfecture de la Consol*, where he first came into contact with newspapers written in Central Asian languages. During this time he met the historian Chantal Lemerancier-Quelquejay, with whom he produced a number of important works on Central Asia's history before the Revolution.

In the early 1950s he and his wife travelled widely in the Muslim world collecting oral records of recent history, folklore and epic verse before he returned to Paris to take a Chair in the history of non-Arabic Islam at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*.

Bennigsen held this post as Emeritus until his retirement in 1983, but in 1969 he travelled to the USA, working first at the Universities of Rochester and Indiana, before finding tenure at Chicago in 1971. For the rest of his working life he remained in Chicago, whilst also spending periods in Florida and Washington DC.

A deeply devout man, the religious question excited Bennigsen from the first. The reason for this he explained.

When one compares the local newspapers of the Muslim republics with the press of the other Union Republics, one is struck by the profound difference which separates them in the matter of the religious problem. In Moscow, Kiev, Tbilisi, Yerevan or Minsk papers the religious problem is very seldom alluded to; and when by chance a specialist organ devoted to anti-religious polemic such as Moscow's *Komsomolskaya Pravda* devoted an article to this problem, the tone stays moderate, with a clear effort to remain scientific. By contrast, in Central Asia and Azerbaijan, as in Lithuania (the only Union Republic with a Catholic population), the press publishes a large number of articles against religion, and their tone is extremely violent.⁵²

The seriousness with which the Soviets took Islam should be matched in the West. It related to Bennigsen's other reason for focusing on religion. Islam was at the root of the cultural differences separating Central Asians from Russians, and the attitude of the Central Asian intelligentsia towards religion would profoundly affect its relationship to the regime. Returning to the colonial question of co-option or coercion, elite attitudes to Islam and the place of Islam in Central Asian life could not but have an influence on attitudes towards the Soviet authorities.

Bennigsen's treatment of Islam was divided into three parts: the official position of religion within the USSR; the degree to which religious sentiment and practice had survived; and the actual attitude of the authorities towards Islam.

Regarding the legal status of Soviet Islam Bennigsen mentioned paragraph 124 of the 1936 Constitution which guaranteed freedom of religion, including freedom of religious association and ritual practice. Religious involvement in the affairs of state was forbidden, as in Kemalist Turkey.

The strict division between religion and the state was new in Central Asian Islam and it had consequences Bennigsen seems not to have considered. For the first time it became possible not to practise religious rites which in the past had been enforced by social pressure and in the Emirate of Bokhara by a special police force. Nineteenth century accounts of Central Asia suggest that this might have been a relief to many inhabitants. These reports suggest a relative indifference to ritual, albeit one married to a strong self-identification as 'Muslim'. The fact that the most 'fanatical' city of the region required force to maintain observance of the cult suggests that in the absence of force, or if force were to be applied in the opposite direction, many would be content to let religious observance lapse.

Islam was not just removed from the legal sphere. The state took responsibility for education and was not concerned to instil religious values. Private education was illegal and religious 'propaganda', particularly that aimed at children, was a serious offence. Bennigsen mentions this but does not draw out its implications. Forbidden to

be propagated, it was difficult for Islam to be perpetuated, the more so if in urban areas people were inclined to religious indifference anyway.

Urban areas are important. A ban on religious education could not be fully enforced. In as far as it was it would tend to be so more in towns than villages since the control of the state is always stronger in urban areas. Without himself drawing this conclusion, Bennigsen in highlighting the lack of legal or educational force in Islam, suggests an urban environment indifferent towards and possibly ignorant of religious norms. It was from this environment that the new mediating intelligentsia would come.

Regarding Islam's official position, Bennigsen stated it was "tolerated but visibly no longer dominat[ed] public life,"⁵³ citing *Pravda Vostoka* to the effect that it had become "a private affair." This complicated the task of assessing its strength, which could only be measured by the religion's public aspects, the most obvious of which was the mosque.

The number of mosques was impossible to determine. The English-language *Soviet War News* had given the figure as 1,312 mosques and 8,502 mullahs, a figure radically at variance with Monteil's estimate of over 44,000. This figure Bennigsen compared to the 1914 number, as given in the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*, which claimed 24,562 'Muslim parishes' for the Russian Empire. The 1942 total represented "a derisory number for the almost twenty million people belonging to groups entirely Islamised before 1914."⁵⁴

There are difficulties with these figures. Firstly, leaving aside what is meant by a 'Muslim parish,' the two sets are not strictly comparable. The Russian Empire of 1914 was not coterminous with the Soviet Union of 1942 or of 1952, although Bennigsen implies that they represent the same entity. The figures, seemingly showing a rapid decline in mosque numbers during the Soviet period, take no account of frontier changes or demographic changes due to war, migration or famine.

The second difficulty with the figures lies in the proportion of 'mullahs' to mosques. The 1942 statistics give a ratio of just over 6:1, which seems an unusually

high figure. A more recent source⁵⁵ gives a 1926 total of “mullahs, imams, ishans and others in the religious calling” of 5,898, a level before the anti-religious drive less than Bennigsen’s for the War years. Additionally, although used as if unproblematic, the terms ‘mullah’ and ‘mosque’ are not clearly defined, making it hard to see if the tables are actually referring to the same bodies.

By contrast to the decline of mosques indicated by these figures, Bennigsen referred to Pakistani Socialist leader Mubarak Sagher’s 1952 statement that he personally had counted twenty ‘Cathedral Mosques’ and many minor ones in Samarkand alone. No mention is made of what counts as a mosque but Bennigsen, highlighting the difficulty of obtaining accurate information about Central Asia, suggested that “if these rather more optimistic levels are true, they show a veritable renaissance of Islam in Central Asia” adding the cavil that “they are not confirmed by a single Soviet source.”⁵⁶

Bennigsen next considered the question of links between Soviet and non-Soviet Muslims. Only three examples of direct contact presented themselves. In 1945 a poorly-attended Hajj had been organised. The following year a group of Shi’ite dignitaries visited the holy places of Iran. *Todzhikistan-i Surkh* is mentioned to the effect that Isma’ili *Da’is* had infiltrated the Pamir to collect *zakat* on behalf of the Aga Khan. This would appear to be new information unavailable to Monteil, who claimed that although the Isma’ili community had sent a caravan to Bombay (where the Aga Khan then lived) there had been no subsequent contact.

The role of the ‘ulema and the organisational structure of Soviet Islam is treated after this mention of outside links. This might seem unusual, but the ‘ulema’s position as tools of Soviet foreign policy was a common concern. Bennigsen named the four Spiritual Directorates which represented the formal leadership of the community, and noted that a 1943 conference had proclaimed Shi’ism to be a fifth *madhab* rather than a sect, but the Directorates’ activity remained “extremely poorly known by us.”⁵⁷

Concerning the status of the ‘ulema Bennigsen referred to the Soviet press to indicate that they were totally loyal to the regime. For instance the 1952 Zagorsk

conference of Churches and religious organisations was attended by the *Sheikh ul-Islam* of Baku, the Mufti of the North Caucasus and the vice-president of the Central Asian Directorate. At this conference the assembled religious leaders pronounced their hostility to the Korean War. The ‘ulema were for Bennigsen a tool of the Soviet authorities comparable to the Orthodox hierarchy. This is an interesting comparison not so much because the Muslim authorities within the USSR were themselves in a similar position to Christian leaders but because Paris, where Bennigsen lived, was the centre of the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile which regarded itself as the true Muscovite Patriarchate, the clergy within Russia being regarded as spiritually dishonest collaborators who represented neither the True Faith nor true believers. Bennigsen’s analogy suggests that the Soviet ‘ulema be seen in the same light.

Given that there was a shortage of mosques and that the ‘ulema were little more than lackeys of the regime, Bennigsen found himself obliged to ask “are the Muslims of the USSR still Muslims?”⁵⁸ To answer this question he turned to the survival of religious feelings amongst the traditionally Muslim peoples of the country.

There appeared to have been a growth in religious activity since the War. In *Kyzyl Uzbekistan* First Secretary Yusupov complained “the directors of *kolkhozes* and Party members tolerate manifestations of the ancient religious mentality under the pretext that the Muslim faith is the ‘Mother’ of the Uzbek people.”⁵⁹ Monteil referred to this statement, but cast it in such a way that Yusupov appeared to be affirming that Islam is a ‘mother’. Bennigsen’s quotation shows him to be denying it.

Bennigsen affirmed that “the Soviet press is stingy with details and it is hard to say exactly what this ‘renaissance’ of religious activity consists of.”⁶⁰ However, he attempted to describe three of them.

Kazakhstanskaya Pravda claimed that mullahs played “a certain [unspecified] role” in rural life and had infiltrated the Party.

Certain folk-practises were followed. *Kyzyl Uzbekistan* and *Todzhikistan-i Surkh* frequently condemned the Fast. It is not clear why Bennigsen regarded the Fast, one of

the Five Pillars incumbent on every Muslim, as a folk practise. It is possible that he meant to imply that it was observed for traditional and social rather than religious reasons. If this is the case it hardly points to an Islamic renaissance. Bennigsen devoted three pages to the preservation of traditional social customs such as *kalym* (bride-price), which were based on a continuing precedence of *adat* (customary law) over Soviet law, claiming that these were not evidence of religious sentiment.

The Soviet authorities include in the renaissance of religious sentiment the reappearance of customs which they characterise as 'clerical' but which are in reality the application to the new Soviet society of old social traditions.⁶¹

Bennigsen was later to reverse this view and see traditional customs as evidence of religiosity.

Finally the practise of pilgrimage to the tombs of saints was mentioned. Although Bennigsen cited many examples of this he had no claims or comments to make about it, as if it were an insignificant phenomenon. Later he was radically to re-appraise this view.

Bennigsen described the pre-War anti-religious campaigns. Citing two articles from *Pravda Vostoka* and one from *Komsomolskaya Pravda* on the incompatibility of Marxism and religion he stated that in Soviet eyes Islam was primitive and fanatical, a chaotic mixture of Christianity, Judaism and Paganism,ⁱⁱⁱ a foreign imposition and a tool of imperialist powers.

The Soviet attitude towards Islam is seen as being directly related to the questions of colonialism and anti-colonialism. For this reason Islam attracted a relatively high level of Soviet polemic. Islam was attacked for its 'cosmopolitanism.' It was a world movement with its centres outside the Soviet Union, whose members partook of a shared culture and identity distinguishing them from other Soviet citizens. Attacks on Islam were a part of an attempt to create a single Soviet polity and culture.

ⁱⁱⁱ This is a charge which has been levelled at Islam in the West also.

To establish Communism it is not enough to deislamise the believers, it is also and above all necessary to achieve a true cultural symbiosis of all the peoples of the Union by attacking the barriers which separate the Muslims from other human groupings and most especially the Russian people, the 'elder brother' of the great Soviet family.⁶²

Adherence to Islam became a matter not only of social convention, but a positive anti-Soviet, anti-Russian and anti-colonial activity. Having said this, Bennigsen was forced to concede that the policy of deislamisation had been by and large successful, at least in parts of the country.

The anti-religious policy followed systematically up to the end of the War has not achieved the total deislamisation of the rural mass of the ancient sedentary areas where according to the Soviet press religious sentiment remains strong even among some Party members. [It] is not the same in the ancient nomadic areas (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kirghizstan...) and in heavily industrialised and Russified centres (Baku, Ashkhabad...) where the young people seem to be more or less ignorant of Islamic matters...

Islam is not dead, at least not yet, despite the efforts employed. But the process of deislamisation continues inexorably, and there are firm grounds for believing that, barring exceptions, the native youth are just as little informed on Islamic matters as young Russians are of Orthodoxy.⁶³

Bennigsen returned to the question of Soviet Islam in an article co-authored with Carrère d'Encausse which dealt with the interaction between Russians and Muslims, stressing the dominance of the Russian 'minority' over the Muslim 'majority'.

This was characterised in spiritual terms as a new version of the encounter between Islam and the West. The challenge for Islam under Soviet conditions was to arrive at an original response to save its integrity or to direct it in a new path. Was it possible both to be a Muslim and a Communist?

The second of the sections into which the article is divided is entitled 'The Ossification of Islam', signalling that the religion had been unable to come up with a viable response to the Communist challenge. According to the authors there were two reasons for this. Firstly, the Russians' sense of their own cultural superiority precluded the possibility of Islamic culture impinging on Russian. Secondly, the debate was 'unequal'. It was a dialogue between two conceptions of the universe, materialist and

spiritual, which could never meet. No synthesis revitalising Islam could be achieved given the wholly unequal resources available to the competing sides.

The campaign against Islam was described as “a remarkable, subtle, adroit, and definitely effective propaganda”⁶⁴ conducted via various means, initially violent and subsequently ‘scientific’. The reader was referred to Monteil’s work for details of the campaign. Its ultimate goal could be said to be the decoupling of Islam from national identity as shown by Klimovich’s polemic in *Kyzyl Uzbekistan*: “Islam is a religion which is foreign to the peoples of Central Asia, in the service of imperialists and the Arab... and latterly English and American invaders.”⁶⁵ For Bennigsen and d’Encausse this went to the very root of the problem since Central Asians regarded Islam as “the most precious part of an ancestral civilisation... their common heritage.”⁶⁶

For an insight into the results of the anti-religious drive the authors referred to Riaz Ali Shah, who wrote in the Karachi newspaper *Dawn* “in Kazakhstan Islam is in agony... the new generation of Uzbeks totally ignores the Qur’an and does not feel the need to learn it.”⁶⁷ From this they concluded that “it seems the practise of Islam is essentially the affair of old people who still fill the roughly three hundred mosques of Central Asia... What use are three hundred mosques to a Muslim population of between fifteen and twenty million?”⁶⁸

Despite the seeming moribundity of the religion, when asked whether Islam was in terminal decline

The press and the Soviet leaders themselves bring a negative response to these questions in being angered by the vitality of Islam which remains for natives, even seeming unbelievers, the very basis of their society [and] the essence of their nationalism. It is this which separates them, which opposes them to the Russian universe and creates a Muslim community which transcends racial differences uniting Turks and Iranians in its melting-pot. Even when they are deislamised atheists and militant Communists, the natives of Central Asia distinguish themselves from Russians who remain ‘*kafirs*’ in their eyes. Could it be that Islam in Central Asia is nothing more than the expression of native nationalism, which will survive as long as this lasts?⁶⁹

This is a confusing passage. On the one hand Islam shows vitality but on the other it is nothing. The problem lies in what is meant by 'Islam'. Clearly it here means more than ritual practise but if for Central Asians 'Muslim' means 'not Russian', which appears to be what is being argued, this hardly evinces the religion's vitality. 'Not Russian' is a simple statement of fact not a statement of belief, however Bennigsen and d'Encausse use the religious term *kafir* to describe Central Asian attitudes to Russians. This is a highly charged word which, used by a Muslim, implies contempt for the person described. It does not simply mean 'foreigner' but 'unbeliever,' specifically an unbeliever against whom it is permitted to wage *jihad*. It is hard to imagine an atheist using a term which in its strict sense refers to himself. No evidence is provided of any Central Asian so describing the Russians and it seems likely that this term has been imported to give a political and religious colouring to a distinction which could quite easily have had no such significance. Even if a religious distinction were being made, the Russians as at least nominal Christians are not *kafir* but *Ahl al-Kitab*, 'People of the Book' with whom Muslims are permitted to have friendly relations.

In addition to this difficulty over the use of religious terminology is the question of the use of the word 'nationalism' with which Islam is linked. The French word does not necessarily have the political connotations of its English equivalent but can mean simply 'ethnic self-awareness.' If this is the sense in which it is meant, Islam as a religion or social regulator may be weak whilst the conception of 'Muslimness' remains strong. It does not follow from this that Soviet Muslims conceived of themselves as a single bloc as the passage implies.

Bennigsen and d'Encausse emphasised that Islamic doctrine had been almost totally abandoned, leaving a residue of traditions and customs such as celebrating traditional feasts and appealing to a mullah to settle disputes. Thus contrasted with other Muslim societies in which new ways of life evolved within the Muslim tradition in response to such factors as increased education and urbanisation, resulting in the development and reassessment of Islamic theology to meet the needs of the time.

Thus “the Islam encountered in Central Asia is an ossified religion, entirely turned towards the past... in ‘laicising’ Muslim society [the Soviet authorities] have hampered its evolution into modern forms and condemned it to ‘archaism’ to avoid destruction.”⁷⁰

Reducing the religion to a series of customs, the authorities had ironically slowed the development of Central Asian society, since Islam as one of the main markers of ethnic identity had come to be associated with peripheral indicators. For instance 5% of Tashkent women were veiled, a higher proportion than in many other Muslim capitals, whilst women’s non-participation in society and especially in education was not only greater than in other Muslim countries but greater than in the past in Central Asia.

It therefore seems that the Soviet authorities have not yet managed to deracinate the world of habits and Islamic traditions which constitute the basis of ‘national’ culture in Central Asia. They have run up against a passive resistance of the natives who in order to defend [their culture] have revived the past in its most out-of-date forms. Just as they have latched onto their ethnic integrity, Central Asians have latched onto their religious integrity. They thus defend their civilisation which survives in the intellectual and cultural spheres.⁷¹

The concept of ‘passive resistance’ is interesting. No resistance is wholly passive. It must be entered into. It is being suggested that in refusing to accommodate modern ways of life, Central Asians were consciously opposing Soviet rule. According to the authors, “in effect natives are reacting in exactly the same way to defend their religion and their culture: in taking refuge in the past without wanting, or being able, to bring it into the present.”⁷²

The preferred traditional cultural norms were attacked by the authorities as ‘bourgeois deviation’ because, according to the authors, they encouraged an Islamic rather than Soviet world-view, were ‘pan-Muslim’ in recognising non-Soviet Muslims, and in relating to the past kept alive remembrance of anti-Russian revolts. We must ask ourselves who it was who were following these traditional norms and why.

The evidence of Bennigsen’s and d’Encausse’s work suggests that it was likely to have been the rural population of the oases. It is possible that adherence to the past

was a form of resistance to Soviet norms but it should also be remembered that village life was least affected by the changes of the Soviet era. To the people who adhered to traditional habits there need not have been any conflict between new and old since the new was less different in the villages than in the cities where Soviet innovations seemed largely to have been accepted in place of tradition. Bennigsen and d'Encausse appear to want the practise of traditional customs to be a disengagement from Soviet society prompted by concern for national integrity. It may simply have been the indifference of a politically insignificant sector of society to social norms which were irrelevant to their daily life.

This caution notwithstanding, Bennigsen's and d'Encausse's position can be summed up briefly: Islam in Central Asia had weakened almost to the point of vanishing. Where it did survive it did so as a form of opposition to Soviet rule. However, it appeared unable to adapt itself to the needs of the modern age and remained at risk from Soviet policies.

Three years later Bennigsen produced an article which substantially revised this conclusion and seemed to suggest not only that Soviet Islam was not 'ossified' but that Soviet religious policies were failing. Whilst maintaining that 'orthodox' Islam was in terminal decline, Bennigsen stated that Islam survived in forms beyond the reach of the state and as more than a predisposition to certain types of food or styles of dress.

Bennigsen's revision of his previously held view was prompted by the 1957 publication in *Sovetskaya Etnografiya* of an article by G.P. Snegarev entitled "Some reasons for religious survivals among the Uzbeks of Khorezm," one of four papers presented at a conference in Stalinabad (Dushanbe) in 1956. The other three, which *Sovetskaya Etnografiya* published only in abstract, were "The survival of ancient beliefs in the contemporary customs of the Tadzhiks of Karategin and Darwaz" by M.R. Rahimov, "Islamic survivals and ancient traditions among the Karakalpaks" presented by S. Kamalov and "Some elements of Sufism connected with Shamanism" by O.A. Sukhareva. All four were prominent Soviet Orientalists.

Bennigsen noted that “all four of these reports acknowledge the extraordinary vitality of religious belief and criticise the official theory of the ‘natural disappearance’ of these beliefs.”⁷³ He quoted Snesev:

Over the years the purely theoretical opinion has been formed that religious survivals in our times have lost their primary importance, that they are no longer deeply rooted in the people’s conscience and, having become matters of habit, are rapidly dying off.

This opinion is false. because though certain religious manifestations may have reached the disappearing stage, others survive and some are even at the stage of formation.⁷⁴

Snesev hinted at the possibility of an Islamic reform movement developing which “strives to adapt the religion to present conditions [and]... attempts to modernise Muslim dogma’.”⁷⁵ Nothing more is said about this movement, but the very fact that it is mentioned undermines Bennigsen’s earlier view of the inability of Soviet Islam to adapt to the modern world.

One adaptation is hinted at by Snesev when he refers to the existence of ‘non-official’, that is elected rather than appointed and state-registered, mullahs. Also, “Kamalov speaks of the ‘influence of the *ishans* (leaders of brotherhoods) in Karakalpakistan’ while Snesev discloses the existence of *feminine* ‘brotherhoods’. He describes one which existed *in 1956* in the Khanki district of the Khorezm region and met periodically to celebrate the Sufi *djahr* (*zikr*).”⁷⁶

The existence of ‘brotherhoods,’ reminiscent of Hayit’s *atliq ishanlar*, implies an organised religious life beyond the ambit of the state. This life Snesev termed ‘popular Islam’ as distinct to the ‘official’ Islam of the Spiritual Directorates. Snesev defined this as “that peculiar syncretistic religion which resulted in former times from the fusion of Islam with a complex of pre-Islamic beliefs.”⁷⁷

‘Popular’ Islam consisted of four elements. Firstly, as in other Muslim societies, fetishism, the use of amulets, practise of ritual magic and the invocation of “barely Islamicised female deities”⁷⁸ was practised.

Another feature was a developed cult of ancestors which manifested itself in the veneration of stones, springs and trees associated with real or imagined figures as well as the custom of making pilgrimages to saints' tombs.

Thirdly 'Shamanist' rituals were observed "which closely resemble and served as a model for the *zikr*."⁷⁹ Men and women travelled the country and held seances which were usually attended by women. In many areas it was common to consult a 'shaman' in the event of illness.

Finally, religion was manifest in family rites. Births were marked by the reading of prayers by a mullah (registered or unofficial). Circumcision was universal and accompanied by a *toi* (feast) at which a religious figure was present. Religious marriage and its attendant *toi* were also widely if clandestinely celebrated in the presence of a mullah. According to Snesev, the secrecy of these rituals was less to do with fear of state disapproval than the desire to avoid the Evil Eye.

We are presented with a range of phenomena. It might be queried which of these are strictly religious. The status of traditional medicine as a religious manifestation is in particular doubtful. It must be noticed that the practices described are precisely of the archaic type which were in decline elsewhere in the Muslim world and which Bennigsen had previously described as 'ossified'.

Snesev linked the persistence of religious rites to the continuing traditional social structure of village life, which he described in detail. This structure was both informed by and reinforced Islamic norms and formed "the barrier preventing new ideas and attitudes from penetrating into the families."⁸⁰ Rural social conservatism might be expected, however "if the conservation of the traditional structure among the rural class is not particularly surprising, Snesev's information on the Muslim worker's milieu is actually sensational."⁸¹

Snesev contended that in cities religious rituals persisted in corporate associations resembling guilds. All 'artisanal professions' had rites of initiation marking the change in status from apprentice to *usta* (Master). At the inauguration of an *usta* a

mullah had to be present. Associations were maintained by the recital by the Masters of collective prayers in honour of the group's 'guardian' saint, *Pir*. This recital took place on Thursdays, traditionally the day on which Sufis perform *zikr*. Associations possessed statutes (*risala*) governing their members' behaviour which were transmitted orally and recited in Arabic collectively by the assembled Masters. Thus far Snegarev has described a traditional guild resembling those still in existence in Afghanistan. That such organisations should continue to survive in traditional professions is unsurprising. What presumably is 'sensational' for Bennigsen is that Snegarev claimed taxi drivers in Khiva had formed a new association under the patronage of Hazrat Daud. A closed corporation, new members had to be blessed by a recital of the *Fatiha* by an *usta* before they could commence work.

This showed that Islam was adapting to new circumstances and that "Muslim society has remained very nearly intact despite forty years under the Soviet regime. The Soviet way of life has hardly penetrated it."⁸² Previously Bennigsen, like Wheeler, had suggested that Soviet Muslim culture and society had been all but destroyed, leaving a husk shorn of vitality. Now he was suggesting that this was not the case. Even in cities new Muslim organisations, which Bennigsen had previously characterised as a form of passive resistance to the Soviet state, could come into being and be perpetuated. Muslim society remained strong, indicating a degree of resistance to and rejection of Soviet norms.

4.viii) Conclusion

If instances of active resistance to Soviet rule seemed comparatively rare in the post-War era it did not follow that resistance was totally absent. Evidence appearing towards the end of the decade could be presented so as to show a degree of escape from state control which, since the state controlled everything it approved of, was necessarily anti-state. That there was a strong current of religious activity beyond the ambit of the state-controlled 'ulema was of especial importance. From now on it was possible virtually to discount official pronouncements and search for a more nebulous group of phenomena which could be used as evidence of resistance to Soviet rule. Although most of the hard evidence for religious activity was being put forward in

France, it was in America that the significance of the phenomenon was to be most fully developed. The relative British indifference to the religious question, which though manifest was never fully explained in the texts, was to result in the 1960s with the contrasting argument, that religious activity did not imply political opposition, being ignored.

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- ¹ **Hostler** (1957) p.116
 - ² **Pipes, R.** (1957)
 - ³ **Wheeler** (1956) p.1
 - ⁴ **Egretaud** (1959) p.237
 - ⁵ *ibid.* p.26
 - ⁶ **Park** (1957) p.204
 - ⁷ **Egretaud** (1959) p.8
 - ⁸ **Caroe** (1953) pp.88/89
 - ⁹ **Monteil** (1953) p.44
 - ¹⁰ **Halpern** (1953) pp.28 & 34
 - ¹¹ **Wheeler** (1954) p.179
 - ¹² *ibid.* pp.186/7
 - ¹³ *ibid.* p.187
 - ¹⁴ **Caroe** (1953) p.35
 - ¹⁵ **Caroe** (1953) p.9
 - ¹⁶ *ibid.* p.239
 - ¹⁷ *ibid.* p.240
 - ¹⁸ *ibid.* pp.44/45
 - ¹⁹ **Monteil** (1953) p.14
 - ²⁰ *ibid.* p.47
 - ²¹ *ibid.* p.46
 - ²² *ibid.* p.43
 - ²³ *ibid.* p.56
 - ²⁴ *ibid.* p.50
 - ²⁵ **Monteil** (1957) p.171
 - ²⁶ **Egretaud** (1959) p.238
 - ²⁷ **Monteil** (1952) p.53
 - ²⁸ *ibid.* p.58
 - ²⁹ **Monteil** (1957) p.172
 - ³⁰ both *ibid.* p.185
 - ³¹ **Monteil** (1952) p.137
 - ³² *ibid.* p.143
 - ³³ *ibid.* p.68
 - ³⁴ *ibid.* p.143
 - ³⁵ *ibid.* p.68
 - ³⁶ **d'Encausse** (1957) p.63
 - ³⁷ **Hayit** (1956) p.305
 - ³⁸ *ibid.* p.357
 - ³⁹ *ibid.* p.308
 - ⁴⁰ *ibid.* p.304
 - ⁴¹ *ibid.* p.310
 - ⁴² *ibid.* p.310
 - ⁴³ *ibid.* p.310
 - ⁴⁴ **Wheeler** (1956) p.2
 - ⁴⁵ **Pipes** (1957) p.30
 - ⁴⁶ *ibid.* p.31
 - ⁴⁷ *ibid.* p.30

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- ⁴⁸ *ibid.* pp.26, 27
⁴⁹ *ibid.* p.28
⁵⁰ **Blank, S.** "Obituary" In: *CAS* 8,I p.ii
⁵¹ *ibid.* p.ii
⁵² **Bennigsen** (1952). No.20 p.24
⁵³ *ibid.* p.11
⁵⁴ *ibid.* p.12
⁵⁵ **Allworth** (1989) p.377
⁵⁶ **Bennigsen** (1952) p.13
⁵⁷ *ibid.* p.13
⁵⁸ *ibid.* p.14
⁵⁹ *ibid.* p.15
⁶⁰ *ibid.* p.15
⁶¹ *ibid.* p.16
⁶² **Bennigsen** (1953) No.21 p.13
⁶³ **Bennigsen** (1952) p.16 & (1953) No.21 p.13
⁶⁴ *ibid.* p.4
⁶⁵ quoted *ibid.* p.5
⁶⁶ *ibid.* p.5
⁶⁷ quoted *ibid.* p.5
⁶⁸ *ibid.* p.5
⁶⁹ *ibid.* p.6
⁷⁰ *ibid.* p.7
⁷¹ *ibid.* p.8
⁷² *ibid.* p.9
⁷³ *ibid.* p.228
⁷⁴ quoted *ibid.* p.228
⁷⁵ quoted *ibid.* p.229
⁷⁶ *ibid.* p.229
⁷⁷ *ibid.* p.229
⁷⁸ *ibid.* p.229
⁷⁹ *ibid.* p.230
⁸⁰ Snesarev, quoted *ibid.* p.232
⁸¹ *ibid.* p.232
⁸² *ibid.* p.233

Chapter 5: Writing on Islam - the 1960s

5.i) Introduction

During the 1960s an understanding was developed concerning how to appreciate the Soviet Union having a large Muslim population.

In this period US scholars began to study Central Asia. Allworth became interested in the field as a result of a pre-existing interest in Turkic studies and as a teacher in the Central Asia Center at the Department of Middle Eastern Languages and Cultures at Columbia University, others were attempting to understand what was in US terms a new field. American scholars did not attempt to hide a hostility towards the USSR which could lead to a romanticised portrayal of pre-Soviet Central Asia. Allworth claimed

In capitals made great by medieval princes a Central Asian who matured after the mid- nineteenth century was born into a tradition still vital enough to provide him with the opportunity for extending his interests widely and becoming, if he had the drive and curiosity, a scholar and a kind of latter day Renaissance man... he engrossed himself in the magnificent old literature, the legendary history of the past and the geography of West Turkestan... outside the seminary he engaged in vigorous sports, practised techniques of irrigating arid land, or conducted foreign trade or travelled abroad. The talented Central Asian composed and performed original music, wrote elegant poetry employing a fine calligraphy and actively participated in the witty intellectual circles found in every important centre.¹

This idealistic view of what Central Asia might have been but for Soviet influence typifies the US attitude towards Soviet 'imperialism'. Allworth's judgement suggests that an almost perfect cultural situation had been totally destroyed. European studies suggested that not all had been lost. Islam, the defining characteristic which separated Central Asians from Russians, persisted.

Muslims were a people apart from the Soviet system whose separateness was expressed and perpetuated by an Islam which, being beyond the authorities' control, was not susceptible to their manipulation. The Soviets were attempting to create a single culture which Muslims resisted by preserving religious rituals. As the decade

progressed a consensus came to be formed as to the nature of Soviet Islam both as religious phenomenon and in terms of its relation with the regime.

5.ii) Kolarz

Walter Kolarz's 1961 *Religion in the Soviet Union*, writttern by a former citizen of Austria-Hungary and fervent anti-Communist, covers religious beliefs throughout the Union and provides valuable information as to the level of attention given to the different faiths in the country. It highlights sometimes diverging interpretations of often similar phenomena. Kolarz's work on Islam presaged much that was later to be written on the subject and was to gain what might be termed the rank of 'standard text'. I shall examine his description of Soviet Islam in some depth.

Within Soviet religion as a whole Kolarz ranked Islam third after Christianity and Judaism. The first eleven chapters of the work deal with Christianity, followed by one each devoted to Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and 'scattered groups' including Baha'is, Yezidis and Zoroastrians. A Eurocentric attitude thus becomes evident at the outset, with Islam as the nominally second largest religious group being placed behind Judaism, a religion Europeans would feel more familiar with.

Kolarz was a devout Christian for whom religion was essence of human existence. He viewed the suppression of religion as a denial of basic human rights, and saw freedom of religion not only as a matter of personal liberty but also of collective freedom. The suppression of a nation's religion was a suppression of that nation. He illustrated his argument with reference to two traditionally Muslim peoples.

Discrimination on religious grounds not only diminishes the rights enjoyed by the individual Soviet citizen but it also prejudices the collective rights of national groups. National rights and religious rights are inseparably connected. The Tatar or Uzbek ethnic group cannot fully unfold itself unless Islamic teaching and the practice of the Muslim faith can proceed without any official impediment.²

This passage comes from the beginning of the chapter on Islam, claiming that the Soviet attitude towards Islam was symptomatic of a colonial dynamic. The suppression

of Orthodoxy by Russians seems less objectionable than that of Islam, since in the latter case two breaches of human rights are occurring, the right to religious freedom and the right to autonomous national development.

At the outset Kolarz characterised religious activity as being, in a Communist framework, an anti-state activity. "Throughout the history of the Soviet Union religion has remained the most visible ideological alternative to communism."³ Religion opposed Communism. It follows that in a Communist state religious activity is anti-state. To practise a religion is a revolt against the state. Kolarz did not mention Article 124 of the Soviet Constitution, which guaranteed freedom of religion. It follows from the opposition of religion and Communism that religious leaders who negotiate with the state compromise their religious authority.

For Kolarz, a functioning religious hierarchy and observable performance of rites did not constitute an adequate measure of religious belief.

Survival of religion is not a question of formal church membership and not a question of religious rites publicly performed. Religion survives in the hearts of men who believe in God, it survives in prayers said and in pious thoughts.⁴

A discussion of what constitutes 'religion' is lacking from Kolarz's work. Whether 'pious thoughts' constitute religion is open to doubt. On a more structural level, if church membership and performance of rites are not reliable measures of religious belief, what is? Counting the number of churches and the size of their congregations may be an imperfect measure of levels of devotion, but it is an exercise which can be carried out. By reducing the importance of the only available objective data, Kolarz opens the way to the acceptance of subjective claims. This is particularly pertinent to his treatment of Islam.

None of the numerous religious factors of Soviet Russia is as difficult to evaluate as Islam... Some have considered it a *quantité négligable* no longer to be reckoned with; others have regarded it as a powerful anti-communist force. What we do know about Soviet Islam from communist sources would tend to prove that institutionalised Islam has declined in the years of Soviet power, but this is not tantamount to a weakening of the Moslem religion. Mohammed did not found a church like Christ, he gave birth to a faith. Islam can, therefore, and does, exist independently of all institutional forms... in describing the fate

of the Moslem religion in the USSR we must look primarily beneath the surface, where Islam continues to live without registered mosques and officially approved mullahs. It continues to live in the faith of the basic tenets of the Koran, in the observance of holy days, in the cult of saints and in many other ways... The division between official and unofficial Islam in the Soviet Union seems to be the only one which is of decisive importance.⁵

‘Official’ Islam can be discounted. The essence of the faith existed in ‘unofficial’ activity. Despite Kolarz’s noting the absence of a formal hierarchy in Islam (apparently what is meant by describing Islam as a ‘faith’ rather than a ‘church’), there is clearly meant to be some kind of parallel between Soviet Islam and the Orthodox Church, within which underground ‘cells’ were known to exist apart from and sometimes in opposition to the hierarchy. This distinction between ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ Islam recalls that made by d’Encausse.

Kolarz noted that Soviet interpretations of Islam varied over the years, as had state policy towards the religion. He quoted Klimovich’s characterisation of Islam as

An anti-scientific reactionary world-concept, alien and inimicable to the scientific Marxist-Leninist world-concept. Islam is in opposition to the optimistic and life-affirming materialistic teaching; it is incompatible with the fundamental interests of the Soviet peoples. It prevents believers being active and conscientious constructors of the Communist society.⁶

Islam was said by the Soviets to be ‘conservative’, ‘reactionary’, ‘anti-scientific’ and ‘anti-Russian’. Kolarz clearly agrees with this last.

Having given an example of a Soviet characterisation of Islam, Kolarz stated that

Originally the Russian communists used the word ‘Moslem’ in a secular sense - a meaning which this term has also acquired in other parts of the world. ‘Moslems’ as the Soviets understood it, were simply people belonging to the Moslem world in a historical and cultural sense, but were not necessarily believers in Mohammed’s religion.⁷

Many points may be drawn from this passage. Firstly there is the phrase ‘Russian communists.’ Does their attitude towards Islam only apply to Russian Communists or to Communists generally? Are the terms ‘Communist’ and ‘Russian’ to be taken as synonyms? If so, can it be taken that being Russian is a pre-requisite for being Communist and that conversely if you are not Russian you cannot *really* be a

Communist? If Russian Communists ‘originally used the word “Moslem” in a secular sense’, how do they now use it? Was it true that everyone used the word ‘Islam’ in the sense of ‘those who follow the teachings of the Qur’an’? These questions are raised but not answered.

Kolarz drew a distinction between ‘Old Mosque’ and ‘New Mosque’ movements. He was attempting to make clear a difference between religious and cultural conservatives and those who wished to ‘modernise’ Muslim society without rejecting their faith. The terms drew from Russian usage. The ‘New Mosqueists’ (*novomechetniki*) represented the modernising trend prevalent in Tatarstan. The ‘Old Mosqueists’ (*staromechetniki*) were traditionalist and particularly prevalent in the North Caucasus. To Kolarz the *staromechetniki* represented the true face of Soviet Islam:

The conservatives were as extreme in their hostility to communism as the reformists were in their servility to the new rulers and their policy, but both invoked the Koran to support their attitude.⁸

The *novomechetniki* were ‘servile’, supportive of a regime which was hostile to them. Their position attempting to find religious justification for such Soviet changes as land reform, in Kolarz’s eyes making an atheist policy a religious duty,¹ gave rise to the “strange phenomenon,”⁹ the Muslim Communist. Kolarz does not use the term, as did Bennigsen discussing Sultan Galiev, to denote a convinced Communist from a Muslim cultural background. Kolarz meant members of the Party active in the administration who practised Islam.

Those who wanted to be Moslem and communist at the same time stubbornly adhered to the theory that Communism and Islam were really identical... This view coincided with that expounded by the ‘New Mosque’ people... there existed a kind of alliance between the religious Moslem communists and the ‘New Mosque’ clergy. The ‘anti-religious’ activity of some Communist Party branches in Central Asia simply consisted of appointing ‘progressive’ mullahs in place of reactionary ones.¹⁰

¹ Kolarz seems to be implying that a policy can be characterised by the fact that it is being carried out by atheists. By this logic, the same policy carried out by a religious body would be a religious one. The idea of a policy being in religious terms neutral is excluded.

Examples of the activities of Muslim Communists included Party meetings in the North Caucasus breaking for prayer. These might indicate the depth of religious feeling among Soviet Muslims and their unwillingness to compromise with the regime. However, examining the sourcing of just one of the claims makes one disinclined to take it at face value.

Looking at Kolarz's claim that Soviet Isma'ilis continued to render *zakat*, two features become apparent. His source is *Antireligioznik* in 1937. In the context of Kolarz's own work it is apparent that this is an anachronism. Kolarz was writing of the period immediately after the Revolution but the example dates from fifteen years later, the height of the Great Purge. The then Agha Khan, Muhammed Shah, was resident in India and could from the Soviet perspective be presented as a 'lackey' of British Imperialism. Intrigue with the friends of British Imperialism was amongst the charges laid on the Purge's Central Asian victims. Taking this into account, and bearing in mind *Antireligioznik*'s purpose in disparaging religion and religious believers, the veracity of the claim might be doubted. Kolarz presents it as fact.ⁱⁱ

The post-Revolutionary years were followed by a period of concerted onslaught. This was necessary, since "in the long run the centralised Soviet Empire could not afford to have two religious policies, one more lenient for the Moslems and another, more intolerant, for the Christians."¹¹ Kolarz implied that the policy developed was more intolerant of Islam than of Christianity. He cited Article 156 of the Uzbek Penal Code prohibiting 'the exploitation of religious prejudices.' No comparable clause appeared in Russian statute.

Kolarz mentioned many of the changes introduced by the Soviets, from educational and legal reform to the *hudjum* (women's emancipation). Although aware that similar processes occurred throughout the Muslim world he warned against the "common trap" of comparison and explaining these events through a theory of modernisation. Soviet policy had to be seen as a ploy against the Muslim faith: "Soviet

ⁱⁱ Important Isma'ili documents were recovered from Shugnan in 1959-63. Had there been links with the Agha Khan it seems unlikely that these would not have been removed to India for safe keeping. Daftary makes no mention of any such links whilst referring to the documents' discovery.

power very cunningly manoeuvred its Moslem opponents into a pose where they defended not religion but an out of date reactionary point of view about women.”¹²

These moves provoked strong resistance. Unveiled women were attacked on the street as whores or killed, a fate which befell the anti-religious campaigner Hakim-zade Hamza, who according to *Bezbozhnik* was literally torn apart by a mob enraged at his attacks on the ‘Tomb of Ali’ in Shahr-i Mardan. For this crime fifty-four people stood trial. The village was later renamed Hamzabad. In the Caucasus, according to both *The Times* and *Bezbozhnik*, resistance was frequently armed.

This opposition precipitated the Great Purge in Muslim regions.

[The NKVD] considered that the continued existence of religious life in the Moslem territories was only due to the connivance of Communist Prime Ministers, ministers and officials of Moslem origin who took mullahs and sheikhs under their protection and secretly favoured the survival of religious superstitions which they publicly condemned... Throughout 1937 and still in 1938 the NKVD discovered one nationalist-clerical conspiracy after another and the alleged conspirators disappeared forever... some of these charges were quite fantastic and had no relation to reality.¹³

Evidence that the NKVD thought like this was lacking from Kolarz’s work, unsurprisingly given that the files for the period were inaccessible. It is not clear why Kolarz links an event which shook the entire country to the question of Islam. It is true that specific charges often were linked to Islam’s survival, but the fact that the Purge went beyond the Muslim regions would suggest that the ‘Islamic factor’ was little more than an excuse for an event which would in any case have occurred. If the aim of the Purge had been to eradicate Islam, if Islam survived due to the connivance of “officials of Moslem origin,” why replace these with more such officials?

In addition to a purge of cadres, religious figures were attacked. Village mullahs were accused of agricultural sabotage, anti-feminist agitation and joining anti-Soviet bands, possibly those same ‘bands’ mentioned by Conquest. Whether we conclude that the existence of these bands was factual or “quite fantastic” is unclear. It is possible that Kolarz intends to imply the latter. His next list of charges, those levelled at the senior ‘ulema of espionage, industrial sabotage and terrorism are plainly absurd.

Kolarz contended that the Purge had little effect on the strength of Soviet Islam, since

Islam remained alive in many ways, tangible and intangible. Traditional places of pilgrimage in the open air replaced the mosque and ordinary farmers and craftsmen were venerated as 'religious elders' and took the place of mullahs. As the religious life could not find any normal outlet, devout Moslems became more and more interested in miraculous visions and apparitions.¹⁴

As evidence Kolarz noted *Pravda*'s complaint that religious influences were still to be found among the 'backward' part of the population of Tatarstan, both Christian and Muslim; a reference in *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* to "underground agitation for the reopening of mosques"; and reports in *Antireligioznik* that there were believers in all Kirghiz villages and that a Pamiri had proclaimed himself deputy to the Agha Khan.

The impotence of the authorities in subverting Islam was due to over-reliance on attacking the formal institutions of the faith. This resulted from the Communist attitude to social organisation.

The communists probably overrated the significance of the persecution of the Muslim clergy as they had over estimated the impact of the closing of the mosques. Communists are naturally inclined to consider the strength of an opponent on the basis of the "cadres" at his disposal and the institutions over which he holds power. However a few shrewder Soviet observers... have given a timely warning that the hold of religion on a Moslem country could not be measured in terms of mosques and mullahs.¹⁵

In the Soviet Union it is hard to see how it could be measured at all, since

All attempts to size up properly the situation on the Moslem religious front in Soviet Russia [meet] with the strange Shiah Moslem principle of *takiya* [*sic*], namely the obligatory concealment of religious opinions to escape harm, even at the price of assenting to improper words and actions.¹⁶

This fits Kolarz's view on the subjectivity of religion and allows him to ignore evidence suggesting that Islam did not have an influence. According to this principle not only does absence of evidence for religiosity not argue against the strength of religion but evidence against religious activity does not either. Absent or

countermanding evidence can be explained by an appeal to *taqiyya*: ‘People are devout, they are simply concealing this in order to preserve themselves.’

There are two problems with the appeal to *taqiyya*. As it is impossible to show that *taqiyya* is not being practised, so it is impossible to show that it is unless a practitioner confides that he conceals his faith. Kolarz provides no evidence of any Soviet Muslim admitting to practising *taqiyya*. Secondly, by Kolarz’s own admission, *taqiyya* is a Shi’ite principle absent from the Sunni schools of law. According to one authority¹⁷ it was developed specifically to protect Shi’ites from persecution by Sunnis. 90% of Soviet Muslims were Sunnis, mostly Hanafi. This school enjoins *jihad* or *hejira* (migration) as legitimate responses to persecution. The Constitution guaranteed freedom of religion and many people took advantage of this provision publicly to proclaim their faith. It was to these that Kolarz turned first in his evaluation of Soviet Islam in the post-War period.

The ‘ulema had, Kolarz claimed, no real religious authority, being “almost entirely created by the Soviet propaganda services. They were generals without soldiers.”¹⁸

Kolarz described some of the Muftis’ functions. Abdul Rahman Rasulayev of Ufa’s “purpose was to propagate anti-Nazi statements during the War as a counter to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husseini’s pro-Axis and anti-Zionist pronouncements.”¹⁹ Ahund Aga Ali Zade of Transcaucasia was “used chiefly to propagate [the government’s] point of view among the Shi’ite Muslims of Iraq and Iran.”²⁰ There was

A loyal Moslem hierarchy spreading the legend about freedom of Moslem religion in the Soviet Union could itself play a most useful part in strengthening Russia’s influence in the Moslem world...

As Soviet and communist intrigues grew in the Moslem states, more services came to be exacted of the “Red Muftis”. They had to play their part in welcoming foreign guests from Moslem countries, they were sent on propaganda tours abroad, usually in the guise of pilgrimages, and the Imam of the Moscow mosque was even invited to certain diplomatic functions which Moslem delegates attended.²¹

The 'ulema were passive pawns in the hands of policy makers, with neither power nor initiative of their own. The result of this was that

As from 1941, when the new Moslem policy of the Kremlin started, Islam was allowed to vegetate by becoming an instrument of government policy forced to discredit itself in the eyes of believers.

The Islam which was resurrected in 1941 is an Islam of statements and appeals in favour of the atheist communist regime. It might be argued that the same might be said about the Russian Orthodox Church... To draw such a parallel would be unfair and incorrect.²²

The reason for the inadmissibility of such a parallel was that the experience of Soviet Muslims was qualitatively different to that of Christians. The Orthodox Church had historically supported the Russian state. Russian Christians shared the Soviet victory of 1945. Soviet Islam was said to have been 'defeated', as evinced by the deportation of Muslim Caucasians.

The validity of this distinction between Christian 'victory' and Muslim 'defeat' is dubious and indicates both an assumption about the nature of the Soviet Union, that it was an essentially Russian state, and perhaps a lack of knowledge of and sympathy for Islamic history and theology. Islam has often supported regimes which by its own criteria are unjust, on the grounds that an unjust state is preferable to anarchy.²³ The Soviet victory of 1945 was just that, a Soviet victory. Rasulayev called on Soviet Muslims to pray for this and they shared in the victory as much as did the Russians. Muslims were present at the fall of Berlin. The deportations were not a defeat for Islam. The victims were selected not because they were Muslims but for their nationality.

Kolarz undermined his own contention that Soviet Islam and Christianity were not comparable when he described Zia ud-Din Babakhanov, Mufti of Tashkent, as "the 'Muslim Metropolitan Nikolay'... as versatile and as active a collaborator with the Soviet regime as his Orthodox Christian opposite number."²⁴

If the official 'ulema were simply tools of Soviet policy, irrelevant to the needs of Soviet Muslims, this did not mean that Islam was itself moribund, since an alternative hierarchy was available. This was manifest in the presence of the Sayyids,

A class of people who consider themselves to be descendants of the Prophet and who are therefore held in especial honour... they are frequently venerated as saintsAgainst the Sayyids... the regime is more or less powerless.²⁵

Sayyids are respected throughout the Muslim world, but it could be questioned whether they constituted a counter to the Soviet state. Babakhanov was a Sayyid as well as being the arch 'Red Mufti'.

Along with this pool of people who had religious authority by birth, Islam continued to manifest itself in many ways, particularly in the Caucasus. According to the *New York Times* religion had all but vanished from Baku, but *Bachinski Rabochniki* provided evidence for the survival of religion in Azerbaijan, speaking of "tenacious religious survivals."²⁶ From this Kolarz felt enabled to state that "the official evidence shows that Azerbaijan, years after World War Two, still remained the country of *takiya*."²⁷

Moscow Radio (in Arabic) claimed that the Derbent mosque, with a capacity of 5,000, was full on Fridays. "[F]rom this conclusions may be drawn as to the liveliness of Moslem religious feeling in the Daghestani mountain villages."²⁸

Another North Caucasian phenomenon mentioned by Kolarz was "a feature of the Moslem religion peculiar to the Checheno-Ingush republic... a strange sect called the Kunta Hajji people."²⁹ Kolarz provided no information about these people and the claim was unsourced.

If there was evidence of religious survival in Caucasia, the situation in Central Asia was harder to assess. Islam was weakest in Kazakhstan. In the southern republics the number of mosques had declined massively, but those left attracted large congregations. *TASS* reported an attendance of 10,000 at the Tillah Sheikh mosque in Tashkent on holy days, while P. Latour in *Ausenpolitik* claimed an attendance of 3,000 every Friday. 20,000 celebrated 'Id al-Adha (Kurban Bayram) at Samarkand's Shah-i Zindah complex in 1954 according to *TASS*. Moscow Radio, again in Arabic, reported congregations of 6-10,000 at the Shah Mansour mosque in Stalinabad on holy days.

Mosque attendance seemed high in urban areas, but Islam also remained strong in the villages. “Unregistered but active mosques” were to be found in every Tadjik village, served by “illegal/semi-legal” mullahs and wandering divines.³⁰ Rather than mosques, “the main foe [of the Communists] is the popular piety of the simple Moslems, which expresses itself in countless religious observances and taboos.”³¹

Chief among these was the cult of holy places. “People attribute to pilgrimage and to the mazars [holy places] miraculous effects”³² including the ability to cure sickness or bring rain. The Soviets derided these beliefs as being of pre-Islamic origin (as did many Western and Muslim scholars) but they remained significant. “Even in the late Fifties there were still about twenty sheikhs living [at the Mount of Solomon] guiding the steps of pilgrims and advising them how to make the best of their visit.”³³ New holy places were constantly coming into being. Klimovich observed a shrine to someone who had been struck and killed by lightning near Tashkent. “The most awkward aspect of the problem of the ‘Holy Places’ from the communist point of view is that it is not a ‘survival of the past’ which is doomed slowly but surely to die.”³⁴

In addition to the cult of holy places, the observance of holy days and other Muslim customs survived. ‘Id al-Adha was “supported by hundreds of thousands and even millions of Soviet Moslems.”³⁵ In a 1954 *fatwa* the Spiritual Directorate had made observance easier by ruling that sacrifice was not essential to the celebration. This is an unsourced and unusual claim, since sacrifice is at the heart of the festival. According to D. Kishbekov the Directorate had also ruled that the Ramadan fast was not incumbent on the sick, travellers, nursing or expectant mothers or heavy labourers, thus “skilfully overcoming” Soviet anti-religious propaganda which centred on the health risks attendant on the fast. It is a standard Muslim position that the fast is incumbent only on those physically able to perform it.³⁶

These facts taken with other habits such as circumcision and avoidance of pork indicated a continuing vitality of Islam. However, Kolarz appears to be treating Islam differently to other religions. In his chapter “Moscow and Rome” he described a Catholic pilgrimage to Aglona, Latvia, stating that

not all people going to Aglona go there to pray; some visit the place because it is a pleasant change from routine and others make the pilgrimage because it is a deep-rooted tradition.³⁷

Pilgrimage need not be a function of devotion, although in Central Asia Kolarz implies that it is. In his chapter "The Secularisation of Russian Jewry" he observed that

A large proportion of Jews in Britain and the US have either withdrawn altogether from participation in Jewish religious life, or participate only for reasons of national heritage or family ties, and no longer from religious conviction.³⁸

Muslims are treated differently to Christians and Jews, for whom Kolarz accepts that ostensibly religious behaviour may have non-religious motivation. In the Muslim case it is assumed that all such phenomena have a religious origin.

Concluding, Kolarz remarked that

If one glances back over the many years during which the Soviet communists have fought Islam one easily discovers that much of the fight has been concentrated on the secondary aspects of the Moslem religion.³⁹

These have included veiling, pilgrimage (which above appears as a *primary* indicator of religion) and the wastage incurred by feasts. Islam contained an unassailable inner aspect - the Qur'anic assurance that Islam will triumph over its enemies. In addition,

Moslem faith in Russia is able to derive nourishment from sources which are not only purely spiritual. Islam is a world religion and what happens in one part of the Moslem world cannot remain without effect on other lands and peoples with a Moslem background. The emergence of so many new states in which Islam is a powerful factor, the new role of the Moslem religion as a link between the peoples of Asia and Africa, the prestige which certain Moslem statesmen enjoy in the USSR notwithstanding their attachment to the faith of Mohammed - all this is pleasing to Russia's religious-minded Moslems.⁴⁰

This was said to be true of both the 'religious-minded' and atheist intellectuals.

They must ask themselves whether the Moslem religion, which supplies such a strong spiritual background to the various Afro-Asian nationalisms, can be so simply dismissed as a 'reactionary' ideology. These intellectuals may yet grow

proud of their Islamic heritage and become prepared to accept Moslem religion in a modernised and enlightened form.⁴¹

There is logically no reason why this should be the case. Kolarz assumes a propensity towards nationalism which he suggests could be channelled through an Islamic medium. He alleges that liberation movements in Africa and Asia will have a knock-on effect in the Soviet Union due to the Islamic factor. This is a new understanding of the situation, not extended to Roman Catholics who with their strong hierarchical links to the Vatican and foreign broadcasts aimed explicitly at them might be expected to be more prone to influence from outside. Kolarz's understanding of the Muslim religious dynamic in the Soviet Union appears to be linked to his understanding of the colonial dynamic. Islam, a 'colonial' religion, manifests itself in opposition to Communism and Russian rule. Islamic activity is directly linked to nationalistic activity.

5.iii) Krader

Although Kolarz lived in Britain, his book was published both there and in the US. Born in New York in 1919, Krader's view whilst endorsing Kolarz's understanding also shows how the French position might have found a willing audience in the USA.

The study of Central Asia and of Soviet Muslims remained in its infancy in the USA during the 1960s. Hostler's work remained the primary exemplar of American analysis, however a new generation of scholars began to make its contribution. Edward Allworth and Francis Bacon, an anthropologist, dealt primarily with the historical period. Lawrence Krader, also an anthropologist, treated on contemporary events.

Krader was particularly interested in Central Asian religion. Unusually, he addressed the issue of Islam as a faith, describing its doctrines and introducing doctrinal terms such as *bida'a* (innovation) and institutional expressions such as *waqf* (pious foundation) before categorising the differences between Sunnism, (Ithna-Ashari) Shi'ism and Isma'ilism. A fourth category of Islamic experience was Sufism, which

peaked in Central Asia under Timur and represented “a significant aspect of Islam in Central Asia.”⁴² Krader listed five Sufi *tariqat* which had been active.

The question of how to assess the level of penetration of Islam also exercised Krader. This was important, since

In the present era the religious activity is a gauge of the attitudes of the people of Central Asia towards the Soviet regime. The official position of the Soviets versus religion is well publicised. Therefore the prevalence of religious activity and organisation, other than officially recognised and sponsored, is a measure of anti-regime feeling.⁴³

Two criteria struck Krader as being of significance: “the veiling and hiding of females is a valid criterion for the degree of influence of Islam in Central Asia”⁴⁴ and “the institution of the village priest or mullah is another important criterion of Islamization.”⁴⁵ Other scholars claimed that veiling and the presence of a mullah, or at least a Sayyid, were common.

Krader showed a historical consciousness, quoting Schuyler on the ‘punctiliousness’ with which religious rites had been followed and Burns, who stated that “every town and village is ruled by the mullahs.” This historical consciousness however is also a weakness, since Krader changed tense from past to present and back without warning. Whilst his text states of the traditionally sedentary population of Central Asia that “they are all devout Muslims, and the less sympathetic observers have termed them fanatical,”⁴⁶ implying that this was the case at the time he was writing, an endnote attached to the statement refers to sources dating from 1890, 1879 and 1826.

Krader drew a distinction between ‘shamans’, or ‘folk healers,’ and Muslim religious authorities, quoting Snegarev’s article of 1956. As he explained it,

The Shaman acts directly upon the spirits and on the forces of illness, good fortune, evil fortune; the mullah on the contrary acts only as an intermediary seeking to invoke the power of Allah.⁴⁷

Sometimes though, particularly among the Kazakhs, a mullah could double as a shaman, performing healing as well as religious rites.

The position of shamans Krader linked to the veneration of ancestors and of mountains, which he said was generally in decline although the cult of ancestors remained strong in Khorezm, the area of Snesev's study. Belief in demons; *Shaitan* (the Devil), *Jinns* (personal spirits), *Ajines* (female spirits), *Divs* (male spirits) and *Albostas* (female spirits interfering with childbirth) was said to be universal as was the cult of holy places, of which "there are a vast number"⁴⁸ attracting pilgrims as a substitute for Hajj.

This might seem rather peripheral to an assessment of the strength of Soviet Islam. Krader listed the Spiritual Directorates and mentioned some of their pronouncements, such as condemnation of US involvement in Korea, but it was not primarily in these institutions that Islam's strength lay. Krader took as his starting point for examining this the issue of the seclusion of women, a phenomenon he had already associated with Islamic fervour. Seclusion seemed not to be unusual in settled areas. Krader cited instances of Communist Party workers insisting on the veil, and concluded that "Tadjiks, Uzbeks, Uigurs and Dungans are heavily Islamicised and attach great importance to the veil and to the seclusion of women."⁴⁹ Religion continued to regulate Central Asians' private lives and through this the life of the community.

It is not only in the continuation of private and family rite, at birth, marriage and death that Islamic practise continues. The family rite is related to the community, the ancestor cult, and to all levels of social organisation. Recent Soviet literature has discussed ritual observance in the village, the clan or lineage, and the brotherhood or corporation... Snesev has shown the relation between traditional social organisation and structure in the village, clan and lineage, and the continuity of Muslim rite.⁵⁰

Krader drew a distinction between rural religion surviving in clan relations, and urban religion. Crucial to the latter were the 'brotherhoods', a term Krader used in connexion with Sufis, whom he characterised as "institutionalised into organised brotherhoods... some politically active."⁵¹ The evidence for the continued relevance of these groups lay in that "the brotherhoods are active among urban craft guilds, including... modern corporations, e.g., taxi drivers of Khiva."⁵² Traditionally, however, they operated secretly.

Krader concluded that although the Soviets were attempting to introduce European mores, “the transition of the Asian peoples to mores of these origins is not easy; resentments are often sharp.”⁵³

The result was that Muslims were not involved in the political process, which seemed alien to them. New forms of social organisation could not be developed among Soviet Muslims since

Islamic life and thought in the world have changed sharply in the middle of the XX century, seeking a new adjustment to contemporary historical trends. But this cannot be accomplished in the USSR without the accompanying doctrinal changes, for which an intellectual community [destroyed by the closure of the madrasas] is a conditio sine qua non. Therefore, the future of Islam in the USSR must be considered as a problem apart. The fact that folk religion exists indicated a separation of the life in the farms and workshops from the centres of thought and political action. The Soviet school recognised this separation in 1956, but has done little to overcome it...⁵⁴

5.iv) d’Encausse

Kolarz’s work suggested a split in Soviet Islam between the ‘ulema and the religion’s true heart outside hierarchical control. Carrère d’Encausse, born in Paris in 1929 of mixed Polish and Georgian descent, expanded on and named this ‘non-hierarchic’ faith in two articles at the beginning of the decade.

The first appeared in *l’Afrique et l’Asie* under the title “Organisation officielle de l’Islam en URSS”. The following year Wheeler published a version of this translated and edited by himself as “Islam in the USSR.” There were significant variations between the two, showing how texts can change in transmission

d’Encausse based her comments on Soviet sources and her own observations made on a visit to Central Asia in 1958. The article ostensibly focused on the Spiritual Directorates but made it clear that Soviet Islam was not limited to these outlets.

d'Encausse noted that the nominally Muslim population of twenty-four million made the USSR the fourth largest Muslim country in the world. Only in India was there a larger body of Muslims not living in a Muslim state. Their numbers alone made the Soviet Muslim population of the utmost importance.

She noted Article 124 of the Soviet Constitution (freedom of conscience) and observed that under its terms Soviet Muslim affairs had since 1941 been supervised by the Directorates of European Russia and Siberia, North Caucasus, Transcaucasia, and Central Asia and Kazakhstan. She listed details of these institutions, giving their location, administrative language(s), the names of their Presidents and Vice-Presidents and where possible the names of members of their Executive Committees.

Structurally, the Directorates comprised an Executive Committee of seven to ten members elected every five years by a regional congress. The Committee appointed regional representatives called *Kadi* or *Imam-Khatib*. These titles and their usages should be noted, since here we have terms common throughout the Muslim world being used in an uncommon sense. *Kadi/Qazi* usually refers to the judge in a *Shari'a* court, however there were none in the USSR. In the Soviet context the term *Kadi* has a very specific meaning which differs from that usually intended. This is important since both Soviet and Western scholars often used technical terms in a very loose way, often with misleading consequences. d'Encausse makes it clear that a Soviet *Kadi* or *Imam-Khatib* is the local deputy of a bureaucratic administration which organisationally mirrored that of the CPSU, with secretaries and commissars at different administrative levels. Soviet *Kadis* and *Imam-Khatibs* had a clerical as much as a spiritual function, representing the concerns of the local population to the Directorate and carrying out the latter's demands.

The exact function of the Directorates was not entirely clear, although it was known that they liaised with the Soviet government via the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults.

Raghib Arsan, a Pakistani who travelled extensively in Central Asia, arrived at the conclusion that 'the mission of the Spiritual Directorates is not to propagate

religion and give religious instruction, but to control religion in the name of the central government of the Soviet Union.”⁵⁵

d’Encausse did not challenge this view, so we must assume she shared it. She did however mention two functions of the Directorates which relate directly to religious propagation and instruction. The first was publishing. The Directorates had a monopoly on religious publishing and had produced a Qur’an, calendars, “a kind of Muslim catechism and two periodicals in Arabic characters.”⁵⁶ This represented a sharp drop in the level of religious publishing since the Revolution. Wheeler’s version of the text, whilst neglecting to note that the Directorates had a monopoly on publishing, observed that in the absence of an independent press Party presses had to be used, giving the Party effective control over what was produced.

The state of religious publishing in the Soviet Union was hard to quantify. The fact that the Directorates’ periodicals were in Arabic script implied that they were not intended for domestic circulation. According to d’Encausse a Pakistani ‘alim had found a number of errors in the Soviet Qur’an, a significant shortcoming on the Directorates’ behalf.ⁱⁱⁱ

Confusion surrounding Islamic publishing in the USSR is highlighted when considering the only other example of a Muslim religious text to which reference had been found. Here the article, in Wheeler’s translation, reads

Apart from the Koran, the only other religious work whose publication has been announced is a book called ISLAM-I (MUSUL’MANSKOYE) BOGOSLUZHENIYE (Muslim Form of Service) by Mufti Shakir ibn Sheikh ul Islam Akhballiddin (sic Iqballuddin?), Head of the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of European Russia and Siberia (1957) [the query as to the name is absent from the French text]... it is probably identical with a publication called ISLAM VE IBADAT (Islam and Worship) referred to by the Mufti of Ufa in 1957.⁵⁷

The title proffered appears to be a misprint, carried from the French into the English text, resulting in a Perso-Russian grammatical hybrid. Assuming this is the case, and that it should read *Islam i (musulmanskoye) bogosluzheniye*, it translates not

ⁱⁱⁱ It has been pointed out to me that it is not uncommon for errors to be found in copies of the Qur’an published in Pakistan and even in Saudi Arabia.

as “Muslim Form of Worship” but “Islam and (Muslim) Worship,” almost identical to the Turkic title. However, if both refer to the same text we are faced with the problem of why there should be this duplication. It is impossible to tell whether there were two editions, one in each language, or just one, the title of which had been translated by the Mufti for the purpose of his announcement. If there was a Russian edition it might be supposed to have had a wider circulation than a book presumably written in Kazan’ Tatar, since the number of people who understood the latter was comparatively small. Without knowing whether we are dealing with two separate editions of the same text or with two separate texts, it is impossible to gauge the influence of this work on Soviet Muslims or the influence of the Directorates’ publishing efforts as a whole.

If publishing existed on a low level, Islamic education was in an even worse state. d’Encausse entitled her section dealing with this “Weakness of Religious Education.” Wheeler’s version implies that educational affairs were in better shape, dropping the word “weakness” from the title. His rendition draws parallels with other Muslim countries which the original text does not allow for. When examining the Mir-i Arab madrasa in Bokhara d’Encausse wrote “[the] syllabus... shows that religious education given in the USSR is utterly conservative and traditional.”⁵⁸ Wheeler states that “the curriculum is much the same as in any other medrese in Dar-ul-Islam, except that the instruction appears to be on a very low level.”⁵⁹

These are different things. Wheeler places Soviet Islamic education in the evolving mainstream, but d’Encausse suggests that it has become outmoded. Cairo’s al-Azhar for instance was reformed by Muhammed ‘Abduh to provide its graduates with an education better adapted to the demands of the modern world. d’Encausse’s point was that Soviet Islamic education was inadequate in its content and in the numbers of students exposed to it. On her estimate there were only one hundred students at the Mir-i Arab at any time.

The consequence was that “liturgical Arabic, the indispensable language for the Muslim cult, is less and less known.”⁶⁰ There were fewer people technically able to serve the cult, and those who remained “closely resemble the Russian Orthodox

clergy”⁶¹ in their conservatism, the result of their traditional education. However, if the professional ‘ulema were inadequate, there was an alternative.

It seems that ever since the Revolution the custom has persisted of electing unofficial mullahs from among those of the faithful who have some knowledge of Arabic.⁶²

This is standard practice throughout the Muslim world. However, in the Soviet context the fact of local election is important since it was illegal to practise religious rites without a licence. Licensed ‘ulema were appointed and controlled by the Directorates but there existed a number of religious authorities who operated beyond their control.

It is not possible even approximately to guess the number of these elected mullahs over whom the spiritual authorities exercise no control, since these underground operators [*ces clandestins*] are in fact nearer to wandering fortune tellers and *shamans* than to traditional servers of the cult.⁶³

“Underground operators,” a term which implies a degree of secrecy and invites comparison with the “underground Orthodox” in Russia, seemed a defining characteristic of Soviet Islam. It appeared that the phenomenon was not restricted to isolated cases but was organised. d’Encausse wrote that

[We] are no longer dealing with orthodox Islam but with a popular syncretist religion... which has always existed in Central Asia alongside Islam but at the moment, it seems, possibly as a result of a certain decadence of Islam, to be particularly flourishing.⁶⁴

Popular syncretism included elements of shamanism and ritual magic. “More important and complex is the problem of Muslim brotherhoods (or *tariqa*)”⁶⁵ occupying a grey area between faith and superstition. The idea of Sufism as a syncretistic phenomenon beyond the bounds of Islamic orthodoxy was not new. A Sufi group could be more or less Islamic in nature, as d’Encausse illustrated in contrasting Sufi groups in different areas of the country.

It is hardly possible in the current state of our understanding to place the brotherhoods within Soviet Islam. It seems however that if, in the region where muridism was strong before the Revolution - the North Caucasus and Daghestan - the *tariqa* have maintained purely Muslim traditions, in Central

Asia where they were clearly decadent, they are getting closer and closer to Shamanism.⁶⁶

This did not preclude the revival of Central Asian Sufism. *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* warned that “the revival of Muslim religious orders has been noticed, in particular of the Khultun Khidja (a branch of the Yassawiyya).”⁶⁷ Organised Sufi groups existed. d’Encausse listed both indigenous and introduced orders. They were evidently seen as a threat, to be suppressed rather than co-opted like the ‘ulema. Soviet law allowed any religious body with twenty members to operate and own property, but Sufi groups continued to be attacked.

That Sufism was attacked in the state press is not surprising. All religion was. However, Sufism was also apparently a threat to the ‘ulema.

In 1950 the Mufti of Tashkent replied to some Algerians who asked him whether there were any *zawiya* (brotherhoods) in Central Asia “we regard maraboutism as a religious aberration.”⁶⁸

Sufism existed in opposition to the state-sanctioned hierarchy, outside the sphere of registered and quantifiable religious activity. Islam clearly survived less as a formal cult, but as a nexus of popular, unregulated, activity and an awareness of ‘Muslimness’ which could be expressed in many ways.

This brief outline of the official fabric of Islam in the USSR shows that the religion has an incontestable right to existence, but that its power and possessions have dwindled to almost nothing. Although the exact number of practising Muslims is not known, it is certain that the number of mosques and official clergy is not enough for their requirements. This aspect alone gives rise to fears for the future of Islam. It is however necessary to observe that the closing of mosques and the disappearance of the clergy, however regrettable it may be, do not have the same effect on Muslims as the closing of churches and the disappearance of priests would have on Catholics. As long as there is somewhere in the world a man who remembers that his ancestors used to say “la illaha illallah”, the possibility will remain that Islam will rise again from its ashes.⁶⁹

d’Encausse expanded on religious expression beyond the ambit of the ‘ulema in a 1961 article which closely followed Snegarev and began by quoting him:

We are dealing not only with orthodox Islam, but above all with that specific syncretistic religion which developed in the past from the fusion of Islam with a

pre-Islamic structure... Islam superimposed itself on many more ancient layers of religious concepts... it took on certain characteristic traits which distinguish it from the Islam of other peoples. Certain pre-Islamic beliefs were never established in Islam and existed in parallel with it.⁷⁰

d'Encausse added that

to this original peculiarity, Russian Islam adds a second due to the current situation: for forty years it has lived and evolved in a socialist society. This, for religious sociology, provides a unique subject of study: to know how Islam reacted in an exceptional political and ideological setting: in other words what had become of orthodox Islam or pre-Islamic practices.⁷¹

The phenomena mentioned featured at the 1956 Stalinabad conference: fetishism, ancestor cults, the cult of saints, shamanism and 'brotherhoods'. d'Encausse concentrated on these last three, seeming to imply that they were linked. Starting with the veneration of holy places associated with saints, d'Encausse wrote

This cult, a truly popular religion which was unknown in Islam in the first centuries of the Hegira, conceals the remains of ancient pre-Islamic cults, of which Mazdaeism - the cult of ancestors to which Islam slowly gave support - is one, thanks above all to the activity of the brotherhoods.⁷²

This is reminiscent of the language used by Soviet scholars, with its emphasis on the cult not being 'authentically' a part of Islam but associated with another earlier religion, itself erroneously characterised. Another example concerns descriptions of particular holy places:

[the tomb of] Jumart-Kasab could very well be a Mazdaean sanctuary of Gaïomart, the 'first man' of the Avesta, confused with the biblical patriarch Seth (Sis Pajghambar) and he in his turn with Samson. It is the same with the sanctuary of Bavaris-Baba in Khiva, which scarcely hides the Avestan deity Bivaraspi...⁷³

The linkage between 'Gaïomart' (Avestan Gayo-maretan),⁷⁴ Seth and Samson seems contentious. No effort was made to justify it, nor is it clear who the Avestan 'deity' Bivaraspi might be. The Avesta names one god, Ahura-Mazda, and an anti-god, Angra-Maynu. Bivaraspi should possibly rather be identified with Vishtaspa, the king who adopted Zoroastrianism during Zarathustra's lifetime, or his chief counsellor Jamaspa.⁷⁵ This vagueness is unimportant if the purpose is to discredit Islam by

associating 'Islamic' practices with the period of *jahiliyya*, or ignorance, but it does not advance an understanding of religious life in the Soviet Union.

The cult of saints and holy places was linked to Shamanism. This linkage was made by Snesev⁷⁶ though neither he nor d'Encausse addressed the issue of what shamanism is. This seems surprising in a French work on religion published ten years after Mircea Eliade's influential *Le Chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase*. Shamanism was also connected with Sufism.

On holy places d'Encausse's study is reminiscent of Kolarz's.

It is clear that the cult of saints and of their *mazars*, as it survives in the Soviet Union, is closer to Shamanism than to orthodox Islam. Excepting the rare instances where they are under the authority of the Muslim Spiritual Directorates, the *mazars* are served by people who escape all control of the religious authorities, such as the Sheikhs who are part of the Sufi brotherhoods, and even by Shamans who sometimes organise *zikr* sessions there.⁷⁷

d'Encausse stressed that the importance of shrines lay in the popularity of pilgrimage, which although denounced by the Soviet authorities was not banned.

It seems that this kind of activity [has] become increasingly favoured as the official Muslim cult loses its hold on people's consciousness... Some Soviet observers - such as Snesev - think that "the *mazars* have for a long time taken the place of mosques in popular piety."⁷⁸

Visiting shrines and contact with an organised 'underground' ("Sheikhs who are part of the Sufi brotherhoods") is presented as a substitute for worship in a mosque. However, examining the reports of nineteenth century travellers in Central Asia reveals that pilgrimage played a major role in religious life even then. Throughout the Muslim world pilgrimage has been carried out alongside formal prayer as a supplement to required rituals.⁷⁹ It should therefore not be seen as an alternative form of worship as d'Encausse seems to be implying but rather a complimentary expression of faith.

Visiting shrines is particularly associated with 'healing magic' and beliefs connected with childbirth which d'Encausse associates with shamanism. Snesev introduced the concept of shamanism in connexion with this healing function, including

ritual magic in the class of *perezhitki* ('survivals from the past' - in Soviet usage a term of opprobrium) which had to be eradicated if Communism was to be built. In d'Encausse's estimation rituals connected with healing were more than 'alternative medicine' or even superstition. She connected shamanic healers with Sufism. The rituals of 'shamans' were said to resemble those of Sufis. d'Encausse uses the same term, *zikr*, for both. Unless *zikr* is uniquely to be understood as meaning 'ecstatic trance', the connexion seems hard to explain. The implication is that Central Asian shamanism is in fact Sufism, an impression strengthened when it is asserted that 'shamans' are organised like Sufis into "genuine brotherhoods of Shamans, some itinerant, others established near to holy places which are frequented by pilgrims."⁸⁰ In the context of shamanic practice presented by Eliade this phenomenon would be unique. In justification of the claim d'Encausse quoted *Kommunist Tadzhikistana*: "a troupe of sorcerers, wandering dervishes, divines and other charlatans wander throughout Tadjik villages going from kishlak to kishlak seeking the sick and the ignorant, predicting their future and exorcising demons."⁸¹

What is interesting about this extract is the lack of specific detail. It is not from an academic journal but a daily newspaper. The purpose seems to be to increase a state of vigilance against a shadowy organisation which preys on the weakest in society. In essence it is *agitprop*. d'Encausse did not challenge the apparent equivalence of 'sorcerers', 'dervishes' and 'divines'. A 'brotherhood' or 'troupe' appears as a religious group which the Soviet authorities oppose.

This insistence that a 'brotherhood' is religious and beyond the control of the 'ulema is of significance in the light of Snesev's claims concerning the survival of trade guilds in Khorezm. Like healing magic and pilgrimage, a trade guild (*kustarno-promyslovyie ob''edineniye*, 'artizanal union' in Snesev's words) represents a *perezhitok*, or 'survival' from the past which should have passed away to be replaced by a Trades Union (*profsoyuz*).

The importance lay less in trades guilds surviving as in their apparent religious basis. "Even here," wrote Snesev, "as in the rural population, many religious

survivals remained intact.”⁸² The proof that trades guilds were religious survivals lay in their structure and activities.

The corporations piously preserve the cult of their patron saint (*pir*); every week, on Thursday night, collective prayers unite the members of the corporation and occasionally the masters assemble to read their religious statutes (*risala*). The *risala*, composed in Arabic, is usually transmitted orally. Sometimes relationships between apprentices and masters are regulated not by Soviet law but by the ancient corporate statute.⁸³

d’Encausse repeated Snesev’s assertion that in addition to guilds of smiths and potters a guild of taxi drivers had emerged, and asked whether guilds were connected with Sufism. Snesev did not posit a connexion with Sufism but d’Encausse concluded that the guilds were essentially Sufi organisations, a claim based on similarities between the guilds and Sufi *tariqat*. These included the fact that the guilds were closed groups whose members had to undergo an initiation ritual before joining, following which they were sworn to secrecy and silence. The cult of the *pir* and absolute dedication to the master were other points of similarity, as was the fact that the guilds met on Thursday evenings, traditionally the time of the *zikr*.

In conclusion, d’Encausse remarked that

Islam in Soviet society has undergone a development similar to that of other religions. Like them, Islam has for forty years been a superstructure placed on a pre-capitalist society and from this gap probably results its constant loss of hold over the great mass of believers both as a religion and as a way of life, thus a phenomenon of regression from the original religion towards pre-existing ‘superstitions’ can be seen... In the case of the Muslim religion this sliding towards superstition above all manifests itself as a return to the very ancient beliefs inhibited and dominated by Islam at the time when it governed the whole life of the faithful and which is reviving thanks to its weakness.⁸⁴

Whereas d’Encausse wrote of a growth of superstition as a substitute for formal religion, which had become irrelevant under Soviet conditions, Bennigsen saw the phenomena described above not as pre-Islamic but as fundamental to Islam as it is lived. By replacing ‘superstition’ with ‘parallel Islam’, what at first seemed to be the kind of folk-belief in decline throughout the Muslim world could be re-cast as evidence for the vitality and resilience of Soviet Islam.

5.v) Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejourné

These scholars worked closely together throughout the 1960s, concentrating during the first half of the decade on historical works, relating to the development of Muslim nationalism in the Russian Empire, Lemerrier-Quelquejourné's particular interest. These were overshadowed by their 1967 *Islam in the Soviet Union*. Significantly, while their historical works have not appeared in English, this book, with its immediate relevance to political events of the time, appeared simultaneously in London and New York a year before its first French edition.

Wheeler's preface marks the connexion between Islam and anti-colonialism and highlights the important departure being made by the authors.

The history of the Muslim peoples of the Soviet Union is, or ought to be, of great interest to all who are concerned with the history of Russia in general and that of Communism as much within as beyond the borders of Russia. It also allows an appreciation of the phenomenon of contemporary imperialism, finally it highlights the power of resistance and vitality of Islam.⁸⁵

This resistance in Soviet Islam is the principle theme of the work. It must be assumed that this is resistance to the Russians and Russification. Muslim and national identity are perceived as being inextricably linked and necessarily opposed to Soviet ideology. Further, not only is no distinction made between the concepts 'Muslim' and 'not Russian/Soviet', no distinction is made between 'Muslim' as a cultural identity and 'Islam' as a belief system. In this schema, identifying oneself as 'Muslim' implies a positive, rather than an indifferent, attitude towards Islam. The fact that there are people who so define themselves becomes evidence for the strength of Islam, and identification with Islam implied rejection of Soviet Communism. Wheeler continued,

[the work reveals] the unique phenomenon of Muslims preserving their religion and their way of life under a regime which neither hides its contempt for past practices nor its determination to destroy them. The days of *Jihad*, of Holy War against the 'infidels', may be over, but the Soviet Muslim intellectual of today - a product of Communism - puts up a more subtle, more skilful and more determined resistance to the Russians.

The Muslim intellectual might be - most often is - a scientist, he can even be a convinced Communist, but he remains as a general rule a Muslim, a Muslim technically, intellectually and spiritually better prepared to take on the responsibility of the independent government of his people than the leaders of

many ex-colonial Muslim countries to which the Soviet government lends support today. This silent but tenacious resistance is felt even if it is not entirely understood by the Soviet authorities and it is fascinating to analyse its development. Less spectacular it is true than the triumphal march of the Arab and Ottoman armies in the period of Islam's temporal grandeur, it illustrates in an equally striking way the vitality of Islam's powers of resistance and could, in the long term, show itself just as effective.⁸⁶

The link between Muslim identity and nationalist aspirations is explicit. Wheeler's preface illustrates some underlying assumptions not only about Bennigsen's and Lemerrier-Quelquejay's work, but about much of the Western debate. The first is the equivalence between 'Muslims' who preserve their religion and way of life, and 'the Muslim intellectual' who retains a sense of being Muslim as his salient characteristic. As a Muslim, we must suppose that he preserves his religion and way of life (these are not separated). This preservation is identified as the defining quality of Muslims. Thus the Muslim intellectual has more in common with Muslim non-intellectuals than with non-Muslim intellectuals.

The second assumption is that self-identification as Muslim precludes identification with the Soviet government, even if the Muslim is a part of that government. Identification as Muslim is a form of resistance as identification as Ukrainian is not. Taking the two together the conditions for nationalist unrest appear to be present.

Bennigsen's and Lemerrier-Quelquejay's book is divided into four sections, the first three being historical and the last dealing with contemporary issues. Of these, the last, at seventy pages, is by far the longest, reflecting the importance attached to the immediate situation. The totality of Central Asian history up to the revolution attracts sixty pages, the five year period of the Revolution and Civil War, 1917-1923, scarcely less at fifty. The bulk of this is devoted to Sultan Galiev, giving his ideas of the necessity for an 'Asiatic' anti-colonial Communism prominence.

The work covers a wide range of topics, not all overtly connected with Islam. These include language, historiography, and the Soviet Muslim family. 'Islam' appears as a synonym for 'Muslims,' an association between an ideology and a people

reminiscent of Montiel's use of the word to refer in a general sense to a shared cultural ambit rather than to a particular ideology. These passages re-state Bennigsen's earlier research findings, and represent a compendium of his thought up to the time of his departure for the United States. The final section's long chapter entitled "The Religious Problem" is a departure from Bennigsen's previous work. In many ways it synthesises the work of Kolarz and d'Encausse and logically follows on from their position.

Discussing Soviet Islam, Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejay began by posing the question first put by Monteil a decade earlier: are the Soviet Muslims still Muslim? The points taken into consideration in deciding this resemble d'Encausse's findings. In terms of traditionally held belief the Soviet Union is by population the world's fifth (rather than the fourth) largest Muslim country after India, Pakistan, Indonesia and China. Article 124 of the Constitution is cited. The location, language and structure of the Spiritual Directorates are given. Mosques are enumerated and publications listed. Raghib Arsan is again quoted on the function of the Directorates as tools of the government. The authors conclude that "the activity of the Spiritual Directorates therefore seems derisory."⁸⁷ There was also a severe shortage of religious leaders:

The greater number [of mullahs] are survivors of the pre-Revolutionary period, old people of more than sixty, and the feeble number of young graduates of the Mir-i Arab *medresse* cannot restore their numbers.⁸⁸

Despite this institutional weakness, anti-Islamic propaganda had continued, increasing after Stalin's death. This was true of anti-religious activity in general, a point the authors did not mention. However Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejay felt constrained to observe that "despite impressive statistics... anti-religious propaganda remains insufficient."⁸⁹

Religious activity took complex forms. On the surface little remained of Islam. Zakat was banned, Hajj had all but ceased to exist, the fast though not banned was difficult to perform, forms of prayer were all but unknown and the *shahada* (proclamation of faith) "is expressed by the believer in the silence of his own heart and

escapes the control of the authorities.”⁹⁰ This recalls Kolarz’s insistence on the practise of *taqiyya*.

Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejaye maintained that attendance at Friday prayers was at a very low level. Popular religious feasts were by contrast widely observed. The two Bayrams (‘Id al-Adha and ‘Id al-Fitr) were attended by mass festivities. *Turkmenskaya Iskra* noted that five hundred Shi’ites celebrated the principle Shi’ite festival, Ashura, in Ashkhabad in 1965. Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejaye remarked that “if one excludes women, who are not admitted to Ashura ceremonies, and minors, the percentage of faithful seems impressive.”⁹¹

Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejaye admitted that such feasts might be observed for social rather than strictly religious reasons. The Soviet explanation for the popularity of such occasions was precisely that they represented social rather than religious expressions. In fact, despite what was said in the preceding paragraph about the strength of religious sentiment, the authors went on to assert

Despite these instances which are perhaps more ‘national’ than religious, the practice of Islam seems to be declining slowly... at best Islam relates to [the] national past and as such remains an object of respect, but the world view of the young intellectual is that of the ‘scientist’ for whom the practice of a religious cult is an anachronism, if not dangerous. It is not the same for the rural masses. Deprived of ‘official’ religion due to the lack of mullahs and absence of mosques, their belief is rapidly regressing from the position of Islam towards archaic forms of primitive cults close to Shamanism. The Soviet Press provides innumerable examples of this regression from pure religion towards fetishism.⁹²

Two points stand out. The first is that religious activity is predominantly confined to the rural population. This represented the sector of the population least in contact with Russians and Europeanising influences, and in cultural terms could be represented as more ‘authentically’ representative of Soviet Muslim society (the majority of Soviet Muslims lived in villages). The second is that religious life was becoming less associated with theological Islam and instead was taking ‘unorthodox’ forms. Bennigsen and Lemerrier-Quelquejaye call this ‘regression’, implying that it was symptomatic of decay, but what is important is that it represents a process of change,

the development of a new form of Islam beyond the reach of the state-controlled 'ulema.

Two aspects of 'regression' received particular attention. These were the cult of holy places and respect for 'wandering mullahs'. By contrast to what had been said concerning the decline of religion, both phenomena were said to be increasing. This emphasised that it was not religious belief itself which was in decline but a certain type of religious expression, the structured formalism of the Spiritual Directorates ultimately controlled by the government.

According to the Soviet Press, the cult of holy places, not controlled by the Spiritual directorates, far from decreasing has seen a constant popularity over the last few years.⁹³

Holy places were often associated with saints' tombs, showing that members of Sufi orders retained a degree of importance. This was significant when it came to considering the 'wandering mullahs,' people who knew some Arabic and were able to perform religious rites. Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay suggested these were often members of the same Sufi orders as the saints whose shrines were venerated.

These errant mullahs are often members of Sufi brotherhoods... the Soviet Press abounds with often spicy details of this phenomenon... The Soviet Press has revealed to us in the last few years that aside from itinerant mullahs and shamans, this 'non-official Islam' is equally represented by the Sufi brotherhoods (tariqat), which although forbidden by Soviet law have experienced an unexpected renaissance over the last few years.⁹⁴

The source for this claim was Snegarev. *Nauka i Religiya* was also cited as listing three groups in Chechenia and Daghestan linked to the Naqshbandiyya. That these 'errant mullahs' were not simply mavericks is important. If they were Sufis it followed that they were organised. Sufism existed beyond the control of the authorities as a 'non-official Islam'. Bennigsen and Lemercier-Quelquejay asserted that

A religious movement is in the process of being born under our eyes in the areas where [Islam] was once prevalent. This movement seeks to adapt religion to current conditions: it accepts all compromises and tries to modernise Muslim doctrines.⁹⁵

This they compared directly with Jadidism, suggesting a historical link with a movement described by the Soviets as 'bourgeois-nationalist' in character.

It was almost impossible to judge the strength of Islam. Identification with Islam as a religion existed on a number of levels. A study of a *mahalla* in Tashkent which appeared in *Nauka i Religiya* in 1965 had found that while a majority of respondents aged over fifty-five described themselves as believers only 10% adhered to the prescribed rites. However, even those who described themselves as atheist began to perform some religious rituals when they turned fifty-five. This they did for three interconnected reasons: tradition, 'national spirit' and fear of rejection by the community.

Asked why they believed, residents provided three answers: "because an unbeliever would be laughed at," "because my parents did and they should not be gone against," and the curiously tautological "because I am a Muslim." 'Muslim' appears as much as a social and ethnic marker as a religious one, a position reinforced by the marking of rites of passage such as marriage and burial with religious ritual. These rites helped to cement Muslim solidarity as a community and hampered intermarriage with Europeans.

It seems that the most de-Islamised Muslims, who have totally adopted the Soviet way of life including official atheism, do not wish to break completely if not with the religion of their ancestors, then with their community.⁹⁶

Community membership was best expressed in family relationships. A discussion of these filled a chapter of the book. In essence this repeated an earlier article⁹⁷ which drew heavily on Snegarev's work concerning *elat* relations in Khorezm. This was repeated along with examples of other traditional practices

of which the local Soviet Press cited fairly frequent examples and of which the guilty parties are not only 'backwards' elements but sometimes also the new notables: academics, Komsomols. indeed even Party members.⁹⁸

The persistence of the traditional family structure was the result of its patriarchal nature which kept women subservient. This allowed for the preservation of religious ritual and religious sanctions in the home. Snegarev pointed out "[women] continue to

live in an isolated world impermeable to all outside influences.”⁹⁹ This was particularly true among the elite who could afford to keep their wives secluded at home rather than active in the workforce.

As Bennigsen had contended in 1959, in so far as Muslim families had changed it was to strengthen the nuclear unit as a source of identity at the expense of the tribe. The decline of the tribe as a source of identity meant that wider identity had to be sought elsewhere.

The evolution of the family is not an isolated problem, it bears on a coherent whole which is the evolution of a society, of its modes of thought and its aspirations. The problem of the Muslim family connects to another problem, that of the national consciousness of the Muslim peoples of the USSR... all which obstructed the birth of national consciousness in traditional society, feelings of clan or tribal loyalty, local particularisms, has been destroyed. Thus the evolution of the Muslim family towards identification with the Western, viz. Russian, family does not end in the Russification of Muslim society but quite the opposite, in reinforcing national sentiment makes it more uncertain than ever.¹⁰⁰

A circular dynamic is in operation. The Islamic basis of the family ensures its distinctiveness from the Russian family structure. This encourages a focus on national identity, expressed through Muslim mores. The Soviet authorities were powerless to control this: institutional religion was moribund but ‘non-official Islam’ was flourishing and encouraging Central Asians’ sense of distinctiveness from the Soviet mainstream. The consequences of this understanding were to be more fully worked out in the 1970s and 1980s when the sense of ‘distinctiveness’ engendered by Islam was presented as precluding the possibility of being both Soviet and Muslim. At this stage the equation of religio-cultural distinctiveness with nationalism has yet to be made.

Attachment to traditional customs... should not be regarded as evidence of conscious opposition to the Soviet regime... Attachment to the Muslim faith should neither be considered as a proof of ‘nationalism’. One finds in the USSR pious Muslims who are totally loyal to the regime, just as the Russian Orthodox can be faithful to an ostensibly atheist regime. Is it possible to conclude from this that the Soviet regime is wholeheartedly accepted by the Muslims? Absolutely not.¹⁰¹

It cannot be assumed that Muslims support the regime because of their resistance to assimilation.

The desire of the Soviet authorities to see the development of a 'pan-Soviet' culture has definitely been settled. At least for the time being that assimilation of the Muslims into the Russians or into a standard type of 'Homo Sovieticus' might be a long term ideal but it has certainly yet to be realised.¹⁰²

Muslims were not becoming assimilated precisely because they were Muslims.

5.vi) Wheeler

Wheeler's work of the 1960s indicates the change in attitude towards Soviet Islam. At the beginning of the decade Wheeler focused on the history of Central Asia and the colonial question, making little reference to Islam. In answer to the question of whether religion played a part in the failure of Russians and Central Asians to mingle, he replied

In my view it is not so much a matter of doctrinal belief, it is simply that the people have established a way of life, a way of diet, a way of behaviour in general... which keeps them apart from the Russians. I am sceptical about the role Islamic belief plays.¹⁰³

Seven years later he appears to state that religious belief remained a factor in the differentiation of Central Asians from Russians.

The vast majority of indigenous inhabitants of the Muslim republics still readily admit to being Muslims, and as recently as 1966 a Soviet writer could state that the proportion of religious believers in these republics was higher than in any others.¹⁰⁴

The importance of this is that if Central Asians followed traditional cultural norms purely out of habit these could be changed, whereas if their behaviour was inspired by religious considerations acceptance of Communist mores would be difficult. That traditional norms could change without too much hardship was shown by the fact that in the army "Muslims are greatly in the minority and find themselves obliged to conform to a predominantly Russian way of life,"¹⁰⁵ reverting to traditional habits on demobilisation when conscripts returned to a traditional social environment.

The irrelevance of religion to Russian-Muslim relations was stated in another work from the beginning of the decade.

It is often asserted that Islam is still a living force among the people of the Muslim republics, that it sustains them in their enforced subjugation to the Soviet regime and that in certain circumstances it would unite them in achieving real independence... It can hardly be taken for granted that Islam is any more ingrained in the hearts and minds of the Muslims of the USSR than in other parts of the Muslim world where its practise is not discouraged but where it has failed to withstand the advance of westernisation and where religious movements are often little more than political movements in disguise.¹⁰⁶

Perhaps thinking of the secular political goals of the Muslim League in India, Wheeler appears unwilling to ascribe religious content to politico-religious movements. However, it could be argued that if political dissent cannot be expressed via political media it will manifest itself via alternative channels, one of which might be religion.

Wheeler hints at the possibility that such a manifestation might have been developing in the Soviet Union. The only specific aspect of Islam he mentioned was Sufism. Although saying little about this, and citing no sources, Wheeler asserted that the Soviets were strongly hostile to Sufism and suggested that “the special suspicion of the Sufi sects... is perhaps due to fear of them as a possible vehicle of secret communication among anti-Soviet elements.”¹⁰⁷ This statement was later to appear in the work of Bennigsen.

The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia and *The Peoples of Soviet Central Asia* focused on the colonial dynamic in the context of a process of Westernisation which was far advanced. Although Central Asian self-identification as Muslim remained common, this lacked religious content: “the outward observance of Islam is probably less than in any other part of the Muslim world.”¹⁰⁸ Nonetheless Central Asian society remained distinct from Soviet society as a whole.

The defining feature of Central Asians, their culture, remained Muslim. This was reflected in the title of an article which appeared in *Problems of Communism*. Previously Wheeler had written of ‘the peoples’ of Central Asia but this was entitled

The Muslims of Central Asia, putting an emphasis on 'Muslimness' as a defining characteristic, and hence on what this term means.

It has become clear that particularist consciousness among the Muslims, far from dying out, is actually increasing. This phenomenon is not of course confined to the Muslim republics, but elsewhere its scope is limited to single nationalities that have no positive bond of union with one another. Islam, on the other hand, is a potential connecting link not only among the Muslim peoples living along 3,000 miles of the Soviet Union's vulnerable southern frontier, but also between them and the peoples of the adjoining Muslim countries.¹⁰⁹

'Muslim' no longer appears as a cultural construct but is specifically connected with Islam. Although Wheeler seems to suggest that many traditional cultural habits were not 'Islamic' the thrust of the argument implies the opposite. On the one hand such practices as polygyny and female seclusion "are among the so-called 'Islamic' practices... [which] have little to recommend them and are tending to die out elsewhere in the Muslim world under the pressure of enlightened Muslim opinion,"¹¹⁰ on the other the adjective 'Muslim' is used to differentiate Central Asians from Russians, emphasising that Islam provides the social fault-line.

The link between the assimilation of Muslims and combating Islam is made explicit. Failure to assimilate may be linked to a failure in the fight against Islam. In this context the issue of Russian colonisation of Muslim territories is raised. Whereas earlier Wheeler suggested that this had resulted in a high degree of Westernisation of indigenous populations, he now doubted whether this was the case:

colonisation does not seem to have produced any higher degree of westernisation than exists in many non-Soviet Muslim countries where there is no European colonisation at all.¹¹¹

Wheeler repeated the distinction between civilisation and culture and asserted that although Soviet civilisation had been adopted, culture - 'who we are' - had not. This was due to the strength of what Wheeler called 'native ideology', Islam, and the fact that, in Wheeler's eyes, it was harder for a Muslim than for a Christian to accept Marxism.

The extent to which an alien ideology can be imposed on a subject people depends on a number of factors, such as time, the staying power of the native ideology...

The adjustments which the new ideology demanded of them were much greater than those demanded of the non-Muslim majority...

There is little doubt that communism, *as imported from Europe*, is much more acceptable on a permanent basis to non-Muslim than to Muslim...¹¹²

Islam has certainly not been superseded by communism as an ideological concept...¹¹³

Islam had not given way to Communism as an ideology, but remained the well-spring of Soviet Asian identity. This theme Wheeler was to develop in his final publication written before his retirement in 1968. This was reminiscent of Bennigsen's, Lemercier-Quelquejay's and d'Encausse's work and also calls to mind much of what Kolarz said.

The article appeared in a collection entitled *Religion and the Soviet State: a Dilemma of Power* under the heading *National and Religious Consciousness in Soviet Islam*.¹¹⁴ The book's title implied a conflict between religion and the state. Wheeler's own contribution suggested a link between religion and national consciousness which had been lacking from his earlier work.

Wheeler implies that there is no meaningful distinction to be made between 'historically Muslim' and 'presently Muslim': "Islam occupies second place among the religious communities of the USSR as regards the number of its adherents...the total number of people who can historically be regarded as Muslims is between 25 and 30 million."¹¹⁵ Furthermore the fact of being Muslim separated these peoples from all others in the USSR.

The traditional Islamic way of life, although to some extent affected by Westernization... remains as a whole far more distinct and particularist than that associated with any other religion or ideology; the Muslim peoples of the USSR have much closer cultural, social and biological affinities with the non-Soviet Muslim peoples living adjacent to them than with any of the non-Muslim Soviet nationalities.¹¹⁶

The article began by giving some general information about who the Soviet Muslims were - where they lived and what their racial characteristics were. This was

followed by a section entitled *Islam as a Bond of Union*. Wheeler characterises some of features of the religion of relevance in the Soviet context:

Islam, being like Judaism a non-sacerdotal religion, depends less for its survival on the regular conduct of religious ceremonial worship by qualified clergy than the various Christian sects...
the confession of faith required of every Muslim has to be made in the heart rather than openly...
the persistence of such rites and practices as circumcision and the giving of Muslim names... serve as a tacit admission that God exists^{iv} ...¹¹⁷

Wheeler noted that most Central Asians regarded themselves as Muslim but that Russians did not regard themselves as Christian unless they were active church-goers. Wheeler raised the idea of culture being a 'way of life' rather than a set of tools but moved on from the idea of a simple difference between Muslim and Soviet culture to claim that the former was "inimicable to"¹¹⁸ the latter. Of Jadidism and 'Sultangalievism' Wheeler wrote

Together they convinced the Soviet authorities that Islam constituted a fourfold danger: it was not only, like other religions, ideologically objectionable; it was culturally, socially and politically dangerous as well.¹¹⁹

Culture, society and politics are here all linked with religion.

The next section reinforces the sense of the all-pervasiveness of Islam. The Soviets were guilty of "gravely underestimating the staying power of Islam"¹²⁰ since it "is much more strongly entrenched than they had been led to believe."¹²¹ This was in part due, explained Wheeler in a passage which to modern eyes appears almost racist, to the fact that "particularly among eastern peoples, religion is not just a tissue of superstitions which militates against progress and productivity, but a powerful influence in social and political behaviour."¹²² This resulted in a situation in which "Islam is still - perhaps more than ever - a power to be reckoned with in the USSR."¹²³

Wheeler devoted a short section to a discussion of the relationship between Islam, nationalism and Communism. He suggested that there had been a degree of confusion both in the USSR and the West which had led to Islam being connected with

^{iv} Presumably the giving of Christian names, as practised by the Russians, did not.

nationalism. That Islam was strong he no longer doubted, but this did not mean that nationalism was equally strong.

Islam undoubtedly constitutes some sort of bond of union among the Soviet Muslim nationalities, and also between them and non-Soviet Muslims, but this does not necessarily mean that there is such a thing as Muslim nationalism, or Turkic nationalism, or Turkestani nationalism.¹²⁴

The equation of Islamic/Muslim consciousness with nationalism was the result of an analytical failure.

This is partly due to a failure to distinguish between national consciousness and nationalism. The former is a kind of group solidarity not unlike that of tribe or caste; nationalism on the other hand has the positive aim of creating a nation state with a government peculiarly its own. The term national consciousness can be applied to the feeling of common cultural heritage among the Soviet Muslim peoples; but its essence is negative in the sense of common resistance to Russianization rather than positive in the sense of creating a Muslim nation-state.¹²⁵

This distinction was not made in French writings, which frequently use the term 'nationalism' to denote what Wheeler called 'national consciousness'.

Confusion between 'Islamic' religious and national consciousness was symptomatic of Soviet usage. Wheeler cited the Soviet scholar A. M. Bogoutdinov's equation of the opening of new mosques in Tadzhikistan with nationalism. However, in certain respects this equation seems to have been justified since

The Soviet equation of Islam with nationalism is largely due to the fact that Islam is quite correctly considered a greater obstacle to assimilation than any other religion.¹²⁶

In other words it was adherence to Islam which made Soviet Muslims a people of a different order to other Soviet citizens. Wheeler cites Bennigsen ostensibly to show that Islam was not impermeable to Russian influence, but ending with a claim that Soviet Muslims, rather than abetting the Russians in destroying Islam, would seek to throw off Russian influence.

The confusion between Islam and nationalism current in the West, and to some extent in the non-Soviet East, stems from the belief that Islam stands as an impregnable bastion against communism. That this is not so has been

forcefully shown by Alexandre Bennigsen in his various writings on the subject. In the Muslim republics there are many convinced Muslim communists who, so far from collaborating with the Russians in the extirpation of Islam, dream of the time when they will be able to assume control of their own affairs.¹²⁷

Local Communists are qualified as 'Muslim', implying that they differ from Russian or Ukrainian Communists. They are stated not to be fighting against Islam. In fact they 'want to assume control of their own affairs.' This would presumably include a policy on religion which would differ from that of the Russians. Wheeler stated that Islam could only survive as long as the Muslim republics lasted, but that given their continued existence

their political and economic stature is likely to increase, perhaps to the degree of their acquiring some degree of genuine independence, and of reestablishing contact with the non-Soviet Muslim world. Even if they remained socialist, which is highly probable, they would, with some possible exceptions, adhere even more closely to Islam... Whether such a development would result in a revival of Islam as a religion, as a mainspring of life, is hard to say. A return to Islamic piety as practised, for example, in Pakistan, is perhaps unlikely; but the strength of Islam as a bastion against atheism, if not against communism would certainly be reinforced. In Alexandre Bennigsen's opinion... "Russian Islam is emerging slowly from its isolation and this movement seems to be irreversible."¹²⁸

Wheeler's thought had undergone a certain transformation. In his early works Central Asian Muslims were seen as colonised peoples who by and large acquiesced in their colonisation and for whom Islam was an irrelevance. Later Wheeler suggested that they were not entirely acquiescent in their fate, that because of their faith which linked them to peoples outside the USSR they were resisting Russification/Sovietisation. Muslim self-awareness might result in their seeking their own path independently of the Russian 'elder brother'.

5.vii) Conclusion

The profound influence of Snegarev's article on Western thought should be clear from the above. By the end of the decade the scholarly consensus on Soviet Islam was that

- a) The official 'ulema were hopelessly weakened, compromised and irrelevant.
- b) Despite this, Soviet Islam remained strong
- c) This strength rested on 'clandestine', 'popular' or 'non-official' Islam which manifested itself primarily in the cult of saints and pilgrimage to holy places controlled by Sufi organisations
- d) Non-official Islam survived in opposition to Soviet social policy since it supported social norms at variance with those approved by the government
- e) Rejection of Soviet norms implied rejection of the Soviet Union. Soviet Muslims were more akin to other Muslims than to other Soviets.

Adherence to Islam appeared as the principle manifestation of anti-Soviet and hence nationalist sentiment, a view which was reinforced by developments in the Muslim world and particularly the Middle East after Egypt's 1967 defeat which discredited the Soviet Union and socialist ideology and allowed for a resurgence of Islamically-motivated political ideologies which were to become the centre of the West's attention. This view of Islam as the primary manifestation of Central Asians' rejection of the Soviet system was readily embraced in the USA where Bennigsen was to carry it at the end of the decade.

¹ Allworth (1967) p.349

² Kolarz (1961) p.481

³ *ibid.* p.1

⁴ *ibid.* p.1

⁵ *ibid.* pp.400/1

⁶ Klimovich, L. in *Zarya Vostoka* 10/10/54; cited *ibid.* p.405

⁷ Kolarz 1961p.405

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- ⁸ *ibid.* p.409
⁹ *ibid.* p.410
¹⁰ *ibid.* p.411
¹¹ *ibid.* p.413
¹² *ibid.* p.416
¹³ *ibid.* p.420
¹⁴ *ibid.* p.423
¹⁵ *ibid.* p.422
¹⁶ *ibid.* p.425
¹⁷ **Momen** (1985) pp.39, 283
¹⁸ **Kolarz** *op.cit.* p.426
¹⁹ *ibid.* p.428
²⁰ *ibid.* p.426
²¹ *ibid.* pp.429/30
²² *ibid.* p.425
²³ One of the most important contributions to modern Islamic thought of Shariati was his justification for revolt. See **Enayat** (1982) pp.53-59
²⁴ **Kolarz** *op.cit.* p.430
²⁵ **Kolarz** (1961) p.424
²⁶ *Bachinski Rabochniki* 25/5/56; 26/9/59 cited *ibid.* p.433
²⁷ **Kolarz** (1961) pp.433/4
²⁸ *ibid.* p.435
²⁹ *ibid.* p.434
³⁰ *ibid.* p.437
³¹ *ibid.* p.438
³² *ibid.* p.438
³³ *ibid.* p.438
³⁴ *ibid.* p.440
³⁵ *ibid.* p.441
³⁶ **Hamidullah** (1979) pp.61/2
³⁷ **Kolarz** (1961) pp.271/2
³⁸ *ibid.* p.398
³⁹ *ibid.* p.445
⁴⁰ *ibid.* p.446
⁴¹ *ibid.* p.446
⁴² **Krader** (1966) p.123
⁴³ *ibid.* p.133
⁴⁴ *ibid.* p.125
⁴⁵ *ibid.* p.126
⁴⁶ *ibid.* p.125
⁴⁷ *ibid.* p.131
⁴⁸ *ibid.* p.126
⁴⁹ *ibid.* p.135
⁵⁰ *ibid.* p.137
⁵¹ *ibid.* p.123
⁵² *ibid.* p.137
⁵³ *ibid.* p.136
⁵⁴ *ibid.* p.138
⁵⁵ **d'Encausse** (1960) p.339; English Version (1961)
⁵⁶ *ibid.* p.339
⁵⁷ *ibid.* p.339
⁵⁸ *ibid.* original text p.15
⁵⁹ *ibid.* English version p.341
⁶⁰ *ibid.* original text p.15
⁶¹ *ibid.* p.18
⁶² *ibid.* English version p.342

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- ⁶³ *ibid.* original text p.17
⁶⁴ *ibid.* p.19
⁶⁵ *ibid.* p.19
⁶⁶ *ibid.* p.21
⁶⁷ cited *ibid.* English version p.343
⁶⁸ *ibid.* original text p.20
⁶⁹ *ibid.* English version p.347
⁷⁰ **d'Encausse** (1961) p.212
⁷¹ *ibid.* p.212
⁷² *ibid.* p.216
⁷³ *ibid.* p.216
⁷⁴ **Boyce** (1979) p.12
⁷⁵ *ibid.* p.31
⁷⁶ **Snesarev** (1957) p.64
⁷⁷ **d'Encausse** (1961) p.218
⁷⁸ *ibid.* p.219
⁷⁹ see e.g. **Eickleman** (1989) pp.288-304; **Olsen** (1995) pp.13-19, 46-53
⁸⁰ **d'Encausse** (1961) p.219
⁸¹ *ibid.* p.220
⁸² **Snesarev** (1957) p.70
⁸³ **d'Encausse** (1961) p.225
⁸⁴ *ibid.* p.227
⁸⁵ **Wheeler, G.** "Preface" in **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1968) p.9
⁸⁶ *ibid.* pp.11/12
⁸⁷ **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1968) p.178
⁸⁸ *ibid.* p.179
⁸⁹ *ibid.* p.182
⁹⁰ *ibid.* p.183
⁹¹ *ibid.* p.184
⁹² *ibid.* p.185
⁹³ *ibid.* p.185
⁹⁴ *ibid.* pp.185/6
⁹⁵ **Snesarev** (1957) quoted *ibid.* p.186
⁹⁶ *ibid.* p.189
⁹⁷ **Bennigsen** (1959)
⁹⁸ **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1968) p.194
⁹⁹ *ibid.* p.196
¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* p.202
¹⁰¹ *ibid.* pp.235/6
¹⁰² *ibid.* p.236
¹⁰³ **Wheeler** (1960a) p.102
¹⁰⁴ **Wheeler** (1967) p.78
¹⁰⁵ **Wheeler** (1960b) p.62
¹⁰⁶ *ibid.* p.34
¹⁰⁷ *ibid.* p.35
¹⁰⁸ **Wheeler** (1964) p.192
¹⁰⁹ **Wheeler** (1967) p.75
¹¹⁰ *ibid.* p.75
¹¹¹ *ibid.* p.76
¹¹² *ibid.* p.80
¹¹³ *ibid.* p.81
¹¹⁴ **Wheeler** (1969)
¹¹⁵ *ibid.* p.187
¹¹⁶ *ibid.* p.187
¹¹⁷ *ibid.* pp.188/9
¹¹⁸ *ibid.* p.189

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- ¹¹⁹ *ibid.* p.191
¹²⁰ *ibid.* p.193
¹²¹ *ibid.* p.193
¹²² *ibid.* p.193
¹²³ *ibid.* p.195
¹²⁴ *ibid.* p.195
¹²⁵ *ibid.* p.196
¹²⁶ *ibid.* p.196
¹²⁷ *ibid.* p.196
¹²⁸ *ibid.* p.197

Chapter 6: Islam and Opposition - the 1970s & 1980s

6.i) Introduction

The picture of Soviet Islam which had developed by the end of the 1960s remained largely unchanged until Gorbachev's accession to power. Islam separated Central Asians from other Soviet citizens, preventing their integration into the Soviet whole. Islam was sustained by underground Sufi groups which permeated society. At the same time demographic trends in Central Asia were seen as tilting the balance of power away from the Russians in the Muslims' favour and providing the conditions for ethnic unrest in Muslim regions.

Concomitant with this was the rise in profile of Islamicly-inspired movements outside the USSR, which it was felt would have a profound influence on Soviet Muslims. As the 'Period of Stagnation' ended, many scholars of Central Asia were pressing the view that the primary threat to the Soviet state was that of an Islamicly-inspired, Sufi-led revolt.

A number of books and articles appeared, especially during the Andropov-Chernenko 'interregnum,' concerning Islam and nationalism in Central Asia. Many appeared under Bennigsen's name, often with a co-author. Because of the high degree of consonance between different works this chapter has been arranged thematically rather than grouping together the works of individual scholars.

One change was a shift in the centre of Central Asian studies to the USA. The 'old colonials' were gradually losing their authority. One article by Wheeler appeared in 1975 in *Canadian Slavonic Papers* and in 1982 Monteil's *Les Musulmans soviétiques* of twenty-five years earlier was re-issued, but these were overshadowed by the output of a new generation of scholars, many of whom had studied under Bennigsen. The few works challenging the orthodoxy of an 'Islamic/Muslim threat', such as those of Akiner or Monteil, mostly came from outside the USA.

6.ii) Demography and Conflict

In 1985 one scholar remarked that

The nationality problem in the USSR is one of and perhaps the most important long term problem the Soviet leadership must resolve if it is to maintain the stability of its far flung empire.¹

The 1970 and 1979 Soviet censuses illustrated why this problem had come to the fore.

Following the Second World War it was commonly asserted that Central Asia was being 'swamped' by Europeans. The result of this was that Central Asia's political and economic centres were overwhelmingly of European, usually Russian, population. Kazakhs had become a minority within their own republic.

This migration, which was compared to the French settlement of Algeria, was taken as indicative of the colonial nature of the relationship between Central Asians and Russians. The numbers of settlers led to a substantial dilution of the native element of the populations of the Central Asian republics, giving the lie to the claim that Central Asians were masters of their own homes. In the 1970s this was to change, with far-reaching effects on the way in which Soviet Islam was perceived.

The 1970 census showed a stark contrast between the growth rates of the Russo-Slavic and the Muslim populations. d'Encausse believed this

shows above all that the Soviet community is not a single homogenous nation, but that national divides are continued in demographic splits, thereby creating imbalances which in the near future could be the source of considerable problems.²

The Soviet Union was not a single nation but a colonial empire. Paul Johnson claimed, "One of the lessons of the twentieth century is that high birth-rates in the subject peoples are the mortal enemy of colonialism."³ Demographic pressure would lead to political unrest.

“Intense demographic pressures are developing in Central Asia among the Turkic-Muslim population.”⁴ One source⁵ claimed population growth in Central Asia was three times the national average. Whilst the Muslim population evinced a high growth rate, that of Russians and other Europeans was static or in decline. This was commented on in 1971.

If we consider the fertility rate or child-woman ratio... we observe that it is far from equal... Russians have a very low ratio, one of the lowest in the world... Compared to the low Slavic rates, all Soviet Muslim groups have rates which are among the highest in the world... If this trend continues, in the year 2000 the Soviet Union would probably have a Turkic and Muslim majority and a Russian and even a Slavic minority.⁶

Another estimate⁷ put the Muslim share of the population in 2000 at one third. Projections for population growth based on census data varied. According to Rakowska-Harmstone (b.1929 in what was then Posen, Germany, now Poznań, Poland: at the time Professor of Political Science, Carleton University, Ottawa) the population of Central Asia and Azerbaijan would double in the thirty years to the end of the century.⁸ A later estimate⁹ suggested that this would occur in twenty years and the period 1970-1990 would see a tripling of Central Asia's population. Furthermore,

the natural increase of local population has come to replace migration as the major source of population growth east and south of the Urals in the last decade, thus dimming the prospects for “internationalizing” the population of the national republics by the migration of other nationality groups, predominantly Russians.¹⁰

“Internationalization” was defined as

efforts to dilute ethnic separateness and increase the sense of common identity among the diverse peoples of the USSR.¹¹

Rywkin asserted that “According to the 1970 census, the proportion of Europeans fell to about 63 percent in Kazakhstan and to just over 21 percent in Central Asia proper,”¹² and spoke of the “Muslim ‘reconquest’ of Central Asia.”¹³ Demographic trends were radically altering the relationship between Central Asia and Moscow and at the same time increasing the international importance of Soviet Muslims. The self-described ‘Welsh-American’ Wimbush, who in 1978 worked for the Rand Corporation and later became Director of the Society for Central Asian Studies, Oxford stated,

Perhaps more than any other internal Soviet development, the rapid increase in Muslim numbers underlines the potential for new pressures on Soviet domestic and foreign policies. The USSR is now the world's fifth largest Muslim state.¹⁴

Later he asserted,

By the end of this century, Soviet Muslims could number as many as 100 Million (Soviet estimate) or as few as 65 million (American estimate). Whether one accepts the larger or smaller estimate, the USSR at that time will begin to assume a significant, if not yet dominant, Islamic profile.¹⁵

By contrast to the demographic strength of Muslim peoples, other non-Slavic groups evinced a population decline.

The prospects for the Balkan nationalities do not seem bright. The 1979 census reported that Estonians made up 65 percent of the population of their republic, Latvians 54 percent of theirs. Both figures had fallen substantially since 1959.¹⁶

Baltic peoples were losing the demographic battle. Their numbers in their own republics were declining in the face of Russian migration even as those of Central Asians increased. Rywkin contrasted the Baltic with Central Asia.

Because the three Baltic nations are small and present no visible threat to Russia's future, the most serious problem is in the Muslim republics, with their large territories, [and] rapidly growing populations...¹⁷

This contrast was alluded to by Karklins in a study based on interviews with Soviet Germans.

The most evident contrast is between the Baltic republics where the indigenous nations are seen to be losing in power, and Central Asia and Kazakhstan where the opposite is seen to occur.¹⁸

In the Baltic republics assimilation of the 'titular' nationalities by the Russians seemed inevitable. This was not the case in Central Asia.

Census data suggested a number of trends. Muslims were becoming more powerful through their numbers and the concentration of those numbers. "Russian [political] representation in Uzbekistan will shrink proportionately."¹⁹ One authority

stated, "The results of this expanding growth rate... have already been reflected in the change in proportions between the titular nationality and the Russians."²⁰ The increased numerical importance of Central Asians would be reflected in increased political importance.

Although demographic trends affect the standing of the non-Russian nationalities in many ways, the dramatic growth of the Soviet Muslim population is most consequential since it adds a strong quantitative pressure to native claims for a larger share of the educational, economic, and administrative sector of their republics.²¹

More Muslims would hold positions of political authority, challenging the Russo-Slavic domination of the organs of power. Rakowska-Harmstone drew attention to the presence of Central Asians in the Politburo,²² noting that Kazakh First Secretary Dinmukhammed Kunaev was a close associate of Brezhnev. Others played down the importance of Central Asians at federal level. Rywkin considered that

the participation, for example, of Soviet Muslims in key Party, government, army and security positions in Moscow has always been minimal. Membership of such entities as the Supreme Soviet are of too limited a value to be considered.²³

The corollary was that politically ambitious Central Asians were obliged to work through republican-level channels.

Deprived of an effective voice in the decision-making process in Moscow, individual republics have no choice but to press for increasing roles at home and to avoid giving more than lip service to officially promoted concepts of "fusions" and "integrations."²⁴

Many analysts noted that as Central Asians became better educated and more socially mobile, more entered the republican administration where they could advance their own interests. Karklins in particular emphasised a perception from within the USSR that Central Asians were consolidating power against the centre whilst other non-Russian peoples were losing power.

While 67 percent of [Soviet Germans] who lived in Kazakhstan thought that native power there was increasing, 59 percent of those who lived in the Baltic perceived it as being on the decrease.²⁵ The factor mentioned most frequently as a sign of increasing native power is the indigenous nationality holding more and higher positions.²⁶

Western observers spoke of a return to *korenizatsiya*, the reservation of posts for natives. This development would both create and reinforce tensions between Russians and non-Russians and between the centre and the republics as Central Asians with political power used this to establish patronage networks which excluded Russians.

In the majority of cases, Central Asian Muslims with equal or even lesser qualifications are given priority in their own republics and this causes a great outcry from European job seekers. Warnings directed from time to time against those Muslims who object to the use of Russian cadres within their own republics are aimed at discouraging those who would like to 'Muslimize' the economy as a step towards achieving political control.²⁷

Soviet Muslims are quietly but steadily reclaiming small parts of the power and authority that the Russians stripped from them in the 1920s... We should be alert to this trend and to the political implications of Soviet Central Asians in general using the established system to wrest control over many aspects of their lives from the dominant Russians. Our evaluation of their progress should be tempered with the knowledge that history is replete with examples of "committed" colonial peoples turning on their masters when the moment is opportune.²⁸

Another concern arising from the disparity in birth-rates between Slav and Muslim was the effect this would have on the Red Army. The pool of people available for conscription was becoming more 'Muslim.' Wimbush cited complicity with the Nazis to suggest that Muslims were "almost certainly thought to be of questionable loyalty"²⁹ by the Soviet military. For reasons including lack of technical training and language proficiency, Muslim conscripts were seldom assigned to combat regiments. If this system were maintained severe strains would be placed on the efficiency of the Red Army as a fighting force. If Muslims were employed in combat units this would, according to some arguments, threaten government control over one of its primary instruments of power.

More important than the military impact was the economic impact, which bore on the political situation as it brought Central Asians into direct conflict with Russians. Three factors were at play: the condition of the rural economy, the role of Central Asians in the urban economy, and patterns of migration. The combination of these was felt to be conducive of conflict.

One result of the population imbalance within the USSR was a labour shortage in Siberia and Europe and a surplus in rural Central Asia, which would be exacerbated by Soviet attempts to improve the efficiency of the cotton sector in agriculture by increasing mechanisation.³⁰ Unemployment and under-employment were endemic in rural Central Asia, a situation unlikely to change. “Between 1959 and 1970, the number of rural inhabitants per sown hectare in Central Asia increased by roughly 25%.”³¹ Such growth might be expected to continue. Owing to the need for agriculture to be irrigated, and a shortage of water supplies, the possibility of expanding the area under crops was limited. It was to alleviate this shortage that the scheme to divert the Siberian rivers was mooted.

Developing industry as an alternative to expanding agriculture was not seen as a possible solution. The industrial skills of Central Asians were inadequate. This caused a migration of Europeans into Central Asian cities despite the already existing local labour surplus. Central Asia was too far from principal Soviet markets in the west of the country to make industrial development attractive.³² Large-scale industrialisation would give the region too much economic, hence political, power.³³

The obvious solution to the labour surplus was migration to other areas of the USSR. Lewis, Roland and Clem working together at Columbia, New York, saw this development as probable, but warned that with it would come ethnic tension, since it would take the form of a movement of unskilled farm workers to major Russian cities, comparable to the movement of South Asians and West Indians to Britain or of Puerto Ricans to the US.

The implications of the migration of the Central Asians to Russian cities cannot be overemphasised... Similar experiences in world history certainly would not lead one to expect increased harmony between the two groups.³⁴

Most scholars did not foresee large-scale migration of Central Asians. The evidence suggested that Central Asians were unwilling to leave their home republics. There was however the possibility of migration from rural to urban areas within Central Asia, which would carry its own risks of ethnic tension. Rakowska-Harmstone commented,

if they do not emigrate the demographic pressures within the region cannot but inflame the ethnic conflict, given the fact that the Moslems are largely rural, the non-Moslem immigrants urban.³⁵

In an urban environment, Muslims and non-Muslims would come into direct competition for jobs. The 'modern' sectors of the economy were held by outsiders. Lewis *et.al.* did not consider Central Asian cities capable of absorbing excess rural labour, leading to a situation in which new migrants became economically frustrated. Economic grievance could easily come to be expressed as ethnic grievance, a situation exacerbated by the fact that the rural-urban antagonism characteristic of many societies was matched by an ethnic divide.

The potential for conflict is magnified by the fact that the urban and more modern sector of the economy is dominated currently by outsiders. Therefore, out-migration can be expected to raise not just the plaint that the loss to the family's membership is attributable to the unfair allocation of developmental investments but also the charge that the loss is aggravated because aliens hold the relatively few desirable positions that are available within the homeland.³⁶

Ethnic groups become economic interest groups, and economic and ethnic tensions tend to be synonymous.³⁷

In most cases this situation was seen as contributing to tensions between Russians and non-Russians.

Even if economic frustration did not manifest itself directly in anti-Russian sentiment, it served to heighten ethnic self-awareness and ethnic self-confidence in pressing demands.

Urbanisation was seen as a function of modernisation. This generated its own tensions within society, especially as more Central Asians were completing higher education. One result of this was the creation of urban indigenous elites for whom traditional types of employment were no longer attractive, and who came into direct conflict with a Russian ruling class which discriminated against natives. The resulting dichotomy between aspiration and opportunity was a potential source of conflict.

As they improve their educational levels, their aspirations grow, and they often become increasingly discontent because the dominant group is reluctant to share

the socioeconomic advantages of development with them, especially if they belong to a different nationality or ethnic group.³⁸

Modernisation in a multi-ethnic context is volatile even if the dominant group allows for a degree of economic and social equalisation since the new elites usually perceive that their relative position is changed insufficiently and expectations rise.³⁹

Economic and social change is occurring, accompanied by the same frustrations, questioning and dissatisfaction which has accompanied similar changes and upheavals in other areas of the world. Tensions are growing, and becoming increasingly ethnically charged among Asians and Russians alike.⁴⁰

The ethnic tensions arising from a growing population and increased social mobility could be defused only if Central Asian Muslims made common cause with the Russians, if they identified with the Russians and the Russians with them. Rywkin asserted that “if the Muslims of Soviet Central Asia shared a kind of all-Soviet identity with and allegiance to the Russians, the demographic and geopolitical developments in the area would turn purely to Moscow’s advantage.”⁴¹ In the absence of such an identity, growing Central Asian frustration would lead to greater national self-assertiveness, leading ultimately to calls for independence.

6.iii) Central Asian Distinctiveness

Social and cultural integration was the declared policy of the Soviet government. In effect the USSR was to cease to be multi-ethnic and become a nation-state peopled by what Western scholars dubbed *Homo Sovieticus*. Cultural unity was essential to this project, and

it is on the cultural front that the new integration efforts have been concentrated. Two aspects of these efforts are of great importance in Central Asia: the new drive for linguistic Russification, and a major effort to introduce new “Soviet customs and traditions” as a replacement for the old “reactionary” ones.⁴²

There was evidence that such a merger was not occurring in the case of Central Asians, who had high levels of cultural distinctiveness and thus of ethnic awareness. Research into multi-ethnic societies in other parts of the world suggested that such a situation would provoke conflict if the aspirations of a distinct and subordinate group were not being met: “especially thought-provoking in the Uzbek context is Deutsch’s

theory... that when the rate of social mobilization exceeds the rate of assimilation - clearly the Uzbek position - conflict arises.”⁴³

Central Asians maintained their distinctiveness from other Soviet citizens in a variety of ways, many of which had been mentioned during the 1960s. Language, which Bennigsen had taken as one of the primary markers of ethnic identity, was one of these.

Central Asians were not becoming linguistically assimilated.ⁱ Many scholars doubted whether even if such assimilation occurred this would necessarily diminish ethnic self-awareness. “Glazer and Moynihan have observed in the New York City context that disappearance of language and other national traits is less apt to reduce ethnic awareness among groups with visible biological differences, or where religious differences are a factor.”⁴⁴ Lubin also stated that “linguistic assimilation need not lead to a growing feeling of unity and solidarity.”⁴⁵

The behaviour patterns of Central Asians continued to occupy a large proportion of Western writings as they emphasised the difference between Muslim and Russian. The Muslim way of life was radically at variance to that of the Russians.

In the pattern of everyday life the overall influence of the Russian material culture has been considerable, but “most of the time, the Muslim does not respond to a Russian substitute unless it is more convenient, and even then he tries to effect a compromise between tradition and innovation.”⁴⁶

Customs that *can* be practiced (*sic*) under modern living conditions without much difficulty are well observed. Among them are universally practiced circumcision, marriage, divorce, and burial rites, avoidance of public places and ceremonies during Ramadan, Muslim dietary prohibitions against pork, wearing a *tubiteika* (skullcap), and the *chaikhana* (teahouse) style of “café life.”⁴⁷

One of the most obvious cultural differences was the Muslims’ high birth-rate, seen as a function of the traditional Central Asian family structure.⁴⁸ From this structure flowed a number of types of behaviour unique to the Muslim social

ⁱ According to Rywkin, in 1970 14.5% of Uzbeks were fluent in Russian. **Rywkin** (1982) p.97. This is repeated by **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1977) p.282, who considered lack of fluency in Russian to be a major contributor to *de facto* discrimination against Muslims in employment.

environmentⁱⁱ which were reinforced by the family's patriarchal nature, expressed in respect for elders.

Obedience towards parents, and a pronounced respect for one's elders [are] a distinguishing trait of young Muslims... reverence towards older people is not only significant in itself. it also has major repercussions on the Islamic community and the survival of traditions... it strengthens their general communitarian tendencies.⁴⁹

The strength of the traditional family affected the position of women in society. The Soviets had seen traditional attitudes to women's roles as a major obstacle to building the new society. Evidence suggested that efforts to emancipate the 'surrogate proletariat', as Massellⁱⁱⁱ dubbed Muslim women, had failed. This was shown by the low level of women's participation in employment and the high number of girls of marriageable age leaving education.

Karklins listed a number of practices associated with the family, mainly rites of passage, which served to set Muslims apart from non-Muslims.⁵⁰ The maintenance of such traditions was perceived as being of the greatest importance since as one interviewee remarked, "if one doesn't observe one's traditions one insults one's nation."⁵¹

Rakowska-Harmstone asserted that

Traditional life cycle rituals and ceremonies are widely observed in the Muslim community. in rural areas as well as in the cities, even among the intelligentsia and party members in responsible positions.⁵²

Circumcision and traditional burial were almost universal.⁵³ A number of scholars commented on the fact that Muslims, including Communist Party members, were buried in their own cemeteries according to traditional rites, separating them from Europeans in death as they had been in life. Circumcision was seen as a symbolic marker differentiating Central Asians from Europeans. Being circumcised was a mark of national identity.

ⁱⁱ This is discussed in **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1975) pp.142-144.

ⁱⁱⁱ **Massell, G.** (1974) *The Surrogate Proletariat*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press

In all areas the statement that “he who is not circumcised is not an Uzbek” (or a Turkmen, or a Tajik, etc., as appropriate) is heard not only from illiterate elders, but from educated young men.⁵⁴

Community events also followed traditional patterns. The feasts of ‘Id al-Adha and ‘Id al-Fitr were widely observed, as was the ancient Iranic spring festival *Now-ruz*. Ramadan retained a social significance. “An American reporter asked some Uzbeks, just before the annual commemoration of the October Revolution, to name the most important holiday in the USSR. The invariable reply: the end of Ramadan.”⁵⁵

Soviet attempts to replace these festivals with more ‘progressive’ equivalents failed, as did attempts to establish new rites of passage. It was widely remarked that the so-called ‘Komsomol’ wedding which utilised Soviet ritual was regarded as having less social validity than a traditional ceremony.

Most marriages are now conducted at a legal age and are registered in marriage registration offices (ZAGs), but in most cases they are solemnised by a subsequent marriage ceremony. Marriage is not considered valid otherwise...⁵⁶

The significance of the preservation of cultural traditions in Central Asia lay in the fact that had their roots in Islam. Rakowska-Harmstone referred to “*shar’iat*-based social norms.”⁵⁷ d’Encausse dealt with social customs in Central Asia under the heading “Homo Islamicus in Soviet Society,”⁵⁸ arguing that as essentially Islamic beings, Central Asians could never be fully assimilated into Soviet life. Rywkin devoted a chapter of his 1982 book to “the national-religious symbiosis.”

Islam, which bears on identity, behaviour, attitudes, and way of life of the peoples of Soviet Central Asia, permeates all the social, political, and economic aspects of their lives...

There is hardly a problem in Soviet Central Asia devoid of a Muslim component. The demographic explosion would not have occurred without the influence of Muslim tradition on family life. Similarly, Islam divides the natives from the Russian settlers, has an impact on the division of labour along national-religious lines, curtails social contacts between the two communities, and inhibits the Muslims from migrating outside their areas...⁵⁹

Bennigsen ascribed the failure of Central Asians to assimilate to their remaining

attached to Islam. That means by remaining attached to a corpus of customs, habits, social traditions and psychological attitudes which constitute the ‘Muslim

way of life` ... [This] makes the biological or cultural symbiosis with the Russians difficult or even impossible.⁶⁰

Although it was commonly asserted that the term 'Muslim' related to a group cultural identity rather than to a religious identity, it was not always easy to separate the two.

For the Muslim Turkic peoples of Central Asia, group identity *vis-à-vis* the European, mostly Russian settlers, has been based on feelings of Muslim religious identity.⁶¹

...it is impossible, in real life, to separate Muslim religion from the Muslim way of life, including national-cultural traditions that were shaped by the *Quran*, *Sunnah*, and *Shariah*...⁶²

Islam was the force separating Central Asians from Russians: "Islam continues to provide a basic cultural linkage among Soviet Muslims, and to create an invisible barrier separating them from the ruling Slavs."⁶³ The national identity of Central Asians was intimately linked to their religious identity. In a situation of competition which would heighten ethnic self-awareness and assertiveness, the articulation of 'Central Asianness' would be expressed via Islam.

If one accepts the classical definition that a nationality is "a state of mind corresponding to a political fact," then in Soviet Central Asia the state of mind of the Muslim population is cemented by feelings of Islamic community, standing in opposition to the political fact of Western, European, Russian, Soviet (used interchangeably) domination.⁶⁴

Individuals who share these fears [of assimilation] consider the preservation of Islam crucial to the preservation of their identity... even for a contemporary Muslim the basic attribute that divides or unites representatives of one or many nations is largely the profession of faith.⁶⁵

Islam became an expression of national identity in contradiction to state-led assimilationist policies. "In the final analysis the religious character of Muslim nationalism is a 'natural'."⁶⁶ Islam provided "a spiritualised form of nationalism."⁶⁷ "The Soviet Muslims themselves see Islamic practice as part of their national culture."⁶⁸ Islam inhibited assimilation and at the same time lack of assimilation increased Muslims' self-awareness as a distinct community, thereby strengthening Islam. Given the importance of Islam to the preservation of national identity and resistance to Russification, the ways in which the religion was articulated were of great importance.

The articulation of Islam was divided by Western scholars into ‘official’ and ‘unofficial’ or ‘parallel’. The relationship of these groups to the state, to the people and to each other formed a subject of intense debate.

6.iv) “Official” Islam

‘Official’ Islam meant the Muslim Spiritual Directorates and the legally-sanctioned body of ‘ulema. The existence of this body had been observed in the 1950s, when the administrative structure of Soviet Islam was sketched out. During the 1970s and 1980s, greater attention was paid to the functioning of the Directorates in the USSR as a whole and in the Muslim regions.

The Spiritual Directorates established during the Second World War were in many ways unique in the Muslim world. Bennigsen pointed out, “Since Islam lacks... regular “clergy”, it is impossible to talk about a “Muslim Church.”⁶⁹ In many respects however the Muslim administration resembled such a body, with a ranked hierarchy, a recognised and regulated body of servants of the cult and designated places of worship, a situation “which has no parallel in the rest of the Muslim world.”⁷⁰ d’Encausse compared the Muslim religious administration to that of the Moscow Patriarchate.⁷¹ Bociurkiw also made the comparison with structured churches:

While alien to the Muslim tradition the new organisational structure imposed upon Soviet Islam a structure which was obviously devised for the much more institutionalized, “churchly” religions, like Orthodoxy, and was clearly designed to facilitate central state control over Muslim religious activities, by having them centralized and entrusted to the hierarchically organized, professional “clergy.”⁷²

This situation arose as a result of the unique conditions prevailing in the USSR:

The Soviet state, due to its ideology, does not recognise the existence of individual believers. It allows a religious life to these believers, and for this reason institutions, the Muftiates [exist].⁷³

As the permitted channel for the expression of Islam, the Directorates regulated the affairs of believers and represented their interests to the government via the Council of Religious Affairs, a body within the USSR Council of Ministers which had

branches within each republic. "These Directorates not only provide a channel for discussions with the Soviet government but, more importantly, they are the instrument for organising the religious life of the believers."⁷⁴ In Rakowska-Harmstone's estimation, "The Directorate performs only a few of the traditional functions of the Muslim clergy,"⁷⁵ there being no *waqf* lands or *Shari'a* courts to administer. Bennigsen and Wimbush noted that

The four spiritual directorates are empowered by the Soviet government to control the religious life of all Muslim believers. All the "working" mosques, *medressehs*, and religious publications are placed under their strict supervision. Under Soviet legislation, any kind of religious activity outside the working mosques is illegal and strictly forbidden. All Muslim clerics must be registered with the directorates as well as with the Council for Religious Affairs of the Republic and are paid and nominated by them... The directorates and their registered clerics alone are entitled to represent Islam *vis-à-vis* the Soviet authorities.⁷⁶

Most writers who dealt with the official face of Soviet Islam listed the Directorates, stating their locations and in some cases noting their administrative language. Three such lists, Bennigsen's and Lemerrier-Quelquejay's of 1979,⁷⁷ Akiner's of 1983⁷⁸ and Bennigsen's and Wimbush's of 1985,⁷⁹ are of especial interest for the volume of data they gave. Except in the spelling of personal names, these correlate closely, although some differences are noticeable.

The Directorates were those of Central Asia and Kazakhstan; European Russia and Siberia (Akiner more accurately said Directorate of European USSR and Siberia: it also had jurisdiction over Lithuania and Belorussia); North Caucasus and Daghestan; and Transcaucasia. The first three were described as Sunni and the last as joint Jafari Shi'i and Hanafi Sunni.

The most important was the Directorate of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, which according to Bennigsen had been created in 1943 (Akiner has 1946). 75% of Soviet Muslims^{iv} lived under its jurisdiction. The only Muslim theological schools fell under its control, it possessed the only major Islamic library in the USSR (Akiner p.34), and

^{iv} Bennigsen 1979 p.150. 1985 p.15 - "more than half" according to Akiner p.34

was the only source of Islamic publishing (Bennigsen 1979 pp.150 & 154; 1985 p.15). Akiner (p.34) has it the source of “nearly all” Islamic publication.

The senior staff of the Directorate, based in Tashkent, were named. The chairman, or Mufti, in 1979 and 1983 was named as Zia ud-Din Babakhanov (Bennigsen) or Ziauddinkhan ibn Ishan Babakhan(ov) (Akiner). In 1985 the Muftiate was held by Shams ud-Din Babakhanov whose father and grandfather Ishan Babakhan ibn Abdul Majidkhan, had preceded him. Shams ud-Din was identified as Mufti by Rakowska-Harmstone in 1983.⁸⁰ The disparity between her information and Akiner’s may be due to differing lengths of time in preparing their respective works for publication.^v

The Vice-Chairman, designated by the title Sheikh, was Yusufkhan Shakirov. Akiner added a second, Abdulgani Abdullayev. The Directorate was represented in each republic by a single *Kazi* (Akiner), or according to Bennigsen a *Kaziyat* (delegation). Senior staff were formally elected by the ‘ulema and confirmed in their posts by the Council of Religious Affairs.

Below the Directorate, Islam at mosque level was organised differently, and to read from the available Western sources, confusingly. The basic principle was local democracy. According to Bennigsen, “A Muslim parish (*sic*), compared to its pre-revolutionary predecessor is a curiously democratic body.”⁸¹ Mosques were registered on the request of at least twenty believers. The mosque was administered by a group called the *mutawalliyat* (Akiner) or “a committee of parishioners (Mute aliyyat) which deals not only with the financial and administrative business of the parish, but also, since World War II, with the purely intellectual and spiritual problems which might arise.”⁸²

Akiner states that the *mutawalliyat*, comprising three members elected from the local community, “is responsible for the maintenance of the mosque and is empowered to represent the community of believers in matters involving dealings with state

^v Shams ud-Din’s election was noted by Akiner in a footnote.

organisations or other groups of Muslims.”⁸³ The *mutawalliyyat* reported to the community and its finances were regulated by an accountancy body of a further three people. The *mutawalliyyat* employed the Imam, who was responsible to it. Bennigsen gives examples of occasions on which the *mutawalliyyat* had expelled an Imam, finding his teaching uncongenial.⁸⁴ According to Bennigsen, the Imam, or Imam-Khatib as he was known, was “no more than a technician, a paid employee.”⁸⁵

This seemingly democratic system had its limits, since only an ‘alim accredited by the Spiritual Directorate and the Council of Religious Affairs was legally entitled to seek the post of Imam-Khatib. Candidates had to conform to the demands of the Directorate. Thus the Soviet political principle of ‘democratic centralism’ was preserved in the religious realm. Although formally democratic, Islam faced the same restrictions as other spheres of Soviet society.

Akiner asserted additionally that the Directorate comprised a Council of ‘Ulema which issued *fatwas* (*fetve*) on matters of importance to Soviet Muslims, and an International Department responsible for organising Hajj. The Directorate also provided religious training for all Soviet ‘ulema irrespective of rite.

Bennigsen asserted that “the so-called four Spiritual Directions are not spiritual but purely administrative institutions.”⁸⁶ Shortly afterwards, the same author claimed the Soviet ‘ulema “resembles a highly intellectual ‘General Staff’ which guarantees the preservation of the purity and integrity of Islam at its peak.”⁸⁷ In governing the Muslim community the Directorates were not purely administrative. By determining the content of sermons and issuing *fatwas*, they controlled the content of Soviet Islam. What that content was was a matter of debate.

In 1977 Bennigsen claimed that “Soviet Islam is an intellectual desert, a perfect void,”⁸⁸ although the same article in many ways seemed to contradict this judgement. Gradually, a new picture of the ‘ulema emerged. By 1979 Bennigsen was asserting that “the intellectual and cultural level of the young *ulemas* (*sic*) is excellent, often outstanding.”⁸⁹

Bennigsen drew a distinction between the Spiritual Directorate of Central Asia and that of the North Caucasus. Whilst the latter was seen as conservative, the former was “more progressive and modernist.”⁹⁰ This estimation was supported by Rakowska-Harmstone.⁹¹ The Central Asian Directorate represented by its size and its control of educational institutions the dominant trend. The modernism of the Central Asian ‘ulema was predicated on admitting the practice of *ijtihad*, interpreting the Qur’an by independent reasoning. Allowing *ijtihad* is perhaps the defining characteristic of all Islamic modernist movements, and it linked the ‘ulema to the Jadids. In Bennigsen’s words,

present-day official Islam is also the inheritor of the brilliant pre-revolutionary *jadid* movement which had dominated entirely the intellectual life of Russian Islam and had exercised a deep influence on the entire Muslim world, and whose influence is not completely forgotten.⁹²

The Soviet Muslim leaders of today are executing the liberal programme of the Islamic renaissance, which was established a century ago by the greatest of the Tatar reformers... they are advocating the refusal of the *taqlid* - blind obedience to scholastic authorities; the restoration of the *ijtihad* - the right to interpret the meaning of the Koran, and, more broadly, the necessity to replace “blind” faith by a “reasonable” faith, thus reconciling Islam with science and progress and guaranteeing its survival in the modern world.⁹³

One of the defining characteristics of Jadidism, beyond reformism and modernism, was its pan-Islamic nature, manifest even in the Communism of Sultan Galiev. The Directorates represented the only institution available to Muslims beyond the federal government and Party which transcended republican and ethnic boundaries. The ‘ulema were therefore instrumental in preserving Soviet Muslims’ group identity. Western scholars stressed the concept of Ummah or Islamic community as an integrative factor amongst Soviet Muslims differentiating them from other citizens.

It is obvious that the “collective character” of Islam, backed by a tradition of thirteen centuries, could not be spirited away by a decision of the Soviet agitprop. The inborn sense of the Umma, of the solidarity between Muslims, even when they do not profess their religion, remains as strong as ever. Recent information shows that religious authorities are endeavouring to use this collective character of the Islam (*sic*) in order to prove that it is better adapted to the socialist system than any other religion.⁹⁴

The Islamic leaders in the Soviet Union were accorded the right of unifying and regulating their Muslim communities; of shaping a coherent *umma* in the Soviet Union...⁹⁵

The 'ulema was able to preserve Central Asian exclusivity, especially since their legal rulings strove to lessen the points of conflict between Islam and the state's demands. This meant that self-identification as Muslim did not necessarily exclude a person from Soviet society, allowing Islam to permeate that society and fuelling Central Asians' ethnic self-confidence. d'Encausse observed that the 'ulema stressed the compatibility of Islam with the social, if not the spiritual, goals of Communism, and mentioned an 'alim who castigated the Baptist church for not allowing full participation in Soviet society.

At present Muslim leaders are promoting the political and social integration of Muslims. The journal *Musulmane sovetского vostoka* continually stresses the need for such integration, which would give social and political weight to Islam.⁹⁶

It was made possible for Muslims to function within Soviet society by reinterpreting some of the ritual demands of the religion. For instance, in place of prayer five times daily, once was acceptable. Various people were exempted from the Ramadan fast, and those who were to observe it were not required to do so for the entire month. Some commentators returned to the principle of *taqiyya*, stating that this was permissible.^{vi} Reinterpreting doctrine made the anti-Islamic drive weaker, since this had in the past been directed against many of the traditional aspects of the religion which were being down played or rejected by the 'ulema.

Such statements as the one issued by Velizade Sharif, the Mufti of Transcaucasia: "It is high time for us to understand that many things in the shariat have become obsolete and even rebuke believers" were politically irreproachable - and helped people stick to Islam.⁹⁷

The 'ulema ensured that Islam was able to survive. There was however a price to pay in terms of co-operation with the government.

The Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Central Asia and Kazakhstan in Tashkent is thus the party's instrument for control of religious life in the republics... It is known that the Directorate is closely supervised by the KGB through the Council for Religious Affairs (staffed largely by retired KGB officers)... It is not surprising therefore that the official clergy... are politically loyal and faithfully support official Soviet policies, the price that had to be paid for their very

^{vi} e.g. **Bennigsen & Lemercier-Quelquejay** (1979) p.156, **Bourdeaux** (1984) p.18, **Imart** (1986) p.364

existence... The official Muslim hierarchy... is perfectly loyal and obedient to the Soviet regime. It is certainly the most obedient of all the ecclesiastical administrations in the USSR.⁹⁸

Loyalty took the form of supporting Soviet policy at home and promoting Soviet propaganda abroad, particularly via the medium of Islamic conferences in Tashkent and elsewhere which were seen in the West as being motivated by foreign policy requirements, putting forth the idea that Islam was free in the USSR “whatever evidence there is to the contrary,”⁹⁹ in order to curry favour for the Soviets in the Middle East.

Such loyalty could backfire on the government.

When the imam-katib of the Moscow mosque states, in a sermon against ‘imperialism’ that “it is the right of every Muslim to revolt” or when mufti M. Gaji Kurbanov, head of the Northern Caucasus Department of Spiritual Affairs declares “The Almighty has created all people free and there is no greater sin than to oppress anyone,” he is sure to be approved, but maybe not as expected by his sponsors.¹⁰⁰

‘Ulema loyalty, although recognised as essential to the preservation of the institutions of Islam and regarded as in the main more beneficial to the Muslims than to the government, had its disadvantages.

State control over the ‘ulema, the dilution of the teachings of Islam to avoid conflict with the state, and unswerving support for the state’s actions, made it possible to present the ‘ulema as puppets of the state and not representative of the wider Islamic community, “well-educated, sincere Muslims who nevertheless are not spokesmen for the real Islam.”¹⁰¹ The organic link to the community on which any true claim to leadership must rest was lacking.

The failure of the Spiritual Administrations to defend the legitimate interests of Muslim believers against the Soviet violations of their constitutional “freedom of conscience”, and especially their attempts to deny any such violations at various international forums have served to undermine the credibility of the official Muslim leaders in the eyes of the faithful.¹⁰²

More serious than the 'ulema's role as spokesmen for official policy was their small number. Although d'Encausse warned that counting the number of mosques was not an accurate way of determining the strength of Islam, because Islam could only legally be practised in mosques and since mosques were the 'workplace' of the 'ulema, such a count in the Soviet context could serve as a measure of the 'ulema's strength.

The exact number of mosques in Central Asia was almost impossible to determine. "It is impossible to know how many mosques are now open for worship, since Soviet sources are curiously evasive on this point."¹⁰³ According to Bennigsen¹⁰⁴ their number was given by the Mufti in 1979 as 200 'cathedral' (congregational) mosques and an indeterminate number of smaller mosques, but other sources cited by Bennigsen give the figure variously as 1,200 or 143. Other figures included 450, although it is unclear whether this is for the USSR as a whole; 145 for Central Asia alone; or around 344, again in Central Asia.¹⁰⁵ Bociurkiw claimed that 300 mosques were registered in Central Asia,¹⁰⁶ although he noted that numbers varied, falling at times of attacks on Islam and growing again in more 'liberal' periods.

Several features of 'official' mosques stood out. Bennigsen noted that mosques were concentrated in urban areas, "because there are not enough 'registered' clerics to run the rural mosques."¹⁰⁷ The Muslim population was however predominantly rural. Congregations tended to be large. It was commonly asserted that five hundred or more regularly attended the Friday prayers, suggesting a high level of demand for the services of the 'ulema.¹⁰⁸

Given the high level of religiosity imputed to Central Asians there appeared not to be enough mosques or 'ulema to meet their needs. Rakowska-Harmstone spoke of the "ridiculously small number of mosques and trained clergy."¹⁰⁹ Although in Akiner's estimation, "most Soviet Muslims who wish to attend mosque today will find that the only real obstacle is one of distance,"¹¹⁰ this could prove insurmountable. Bennigsen estimated that "There are probably less than 1,000 'registered clerics' who are paid and controlled by the muftiats - too few to satisfy the religious needs of the population."¹¹¹

It is obvious that official Islam alone could not maintain religious feeling among masses of believers. There are too few mosques left, and too few “registered” clerics to satisfy the spiritual needs of the believers and to perform the necessary rites.¹¹²

However, Islam is a non-sacerdotal religion. The shortage of ‘ulema did not make it impossible to practise the faith. The void was filled by practitioners of ‘unofficial’, ‘out-of-mosque’ or ‘parallel Islam.’

It should be noted that the four spiritual Muslim administrations in the USSR are actually legal in character and can be by-passed by the devout Muslim... The “official” Islam, which these administrations purport to represent thus fails to satisfy that important proportion of the Muslim population which still adheres to Islam... It should not be surprising, therefore, that a “non-official” Islam has arisen to challenge the “official” hierarchy.¹¹³

As the official clerics placed under the control of the Four Spiritual Directions (*sic*) do not suffice for the religious needs of the Muslim population of forty-five to fifty million, they are supplemented by unofficial mullahs... who escape all control of the official hierarchy.¹¹⁴

‘Parallel’, or ‘unofficial’, Islam was seen as more vibrant, more widespread, more ‘authentic’ and more of a challenge to the Soviet authorities than ‘official’ Islam could ever be.

6.v) “Parallel” Islam

Without the activity of parallel Islam, religion in the Muslim republics of the Soviet Union would long since have collapsed into ignorance, indifference or shamanism.¹¹⁵

The term ‘parallel’ Islam, which appeared in Soviet sources from the mid 1960s, requires definition. As a minimum it covers religious activity carried out in the absence of a registered mullah

The term “unofficial Islam” designates those activities of Soviet Muslims that take place outside of the control of the four Spiritual Directorates. Most of the activities that are considered unofficial Islam seem to be just basic Islamic ceremonies such as prayers...¹¹⁶

Islam has no priesthood. Anyone can perform its rites, but ‘unofficial’ Islam was conceived as having a distinct organisation which made it possible to talk of a religious

movement in parallel to the 'ulema. Bennigsen spoke of "two opposite trends"¹¹⁷ within Soviet Islam, and characterised parallel Islam as a "surrogate of official Islam."¹¹⁸ Rakowska-Harmstone wrote that

The almost universal character of religious rites and customs in the family and social life of Central Asian Muslims requires the daily presence of a clergyman, which cannot be provided by the pitifully few registered "servants of the cult." The need for a vast network of "unofficial" clergy is therefore manifest and its existence, albeit illegal, is acknowledged in Soviet sources.¹¹⁹

This conception of parallel Islam as an organised body was repeated elsewhere.

Islam in the Soviet Union has developed along parallel, unofficial and unregulated lines - hence the Soviet-inspired catch-phrase "parallel Islam." Parallel Islam is supported in all regions of the Soviet Muslim world by the constant activity of "unregistered" clerics...¹²⁰

almost anyone with some knowledge of Islamic tradition can conduct the prescribed rituals (birth, burial, circumcision, and so on). Parallel Islam, which is condemned by Soviet authorities and by the official Soviet Muslim establishment in Tashkent, provides these services to the millions of practicing and nonpracticing Muslims in the USSR who find it impossible to have their spiritual and cultural requirements satisfied at one of the officially sanctioned mosques or by clerics licensed by the Soviet state. For millions, a parallel network of itinerant clerics... replaces these servants of the state-approved Muslim organisation.¹²¹

Because the performance of ceremonies not organised by the Directorate was illegal, it followed that parallel Islam was a clandestine phenomenon. "Parallel Islam is, essentially, underground Islam."¹²² "[it] has its own clandestine organisations."¹²³

These organisations were associated with Sufis. "'Non-official' Islam is based on the Sufi brotherhoods."¹²⁴ "The dynamic 'parallel' or non-official Islam - more powerful than official Islam - is based on the Sufi brotherhoods."¹²⁵ This represented a new development. Previous discussions of 'unofficial' or 'popular' Islam concentrated on folk beliefs and family rites. Now however, 'parallel Islam' was described as having an organisation and, increasingly, an ideology.

The terms 'parallel Islam', which at its most basic meant such activity as private prayer at home, and 'Sufism' were often used interchangeably. Broxup, Bennigsen's daughter, wrote of "Sufism or Parallel Islam as it is called in the Soviet Union."¹²⁶

Alternatively, "Soviet Islam has been split into an official religion, represented by sanctioned and co-operative administrations, and an unofficial one grouped around the *Tariqats*." ¹²⁷

Sufi groups, described as 'clandestine' or 'underground', ^{vii} were seen as being all-pervasive, "secret or semi-secret mass organisations." ¹²⁸ "The Sufi orders are not small 'chapels' but mass organisations (despite their clandestine character)." ¹²⁹ According to Bennigsen, in Chechnya - not in Central Asia - over half the population belonged to such groups, far more than belonged to the Communist Party.

Group secrecy, which prevented infiltration by the KGB, was maintained by several means. One was limiting membership to specific clans, resulting in a position in which "adepts are subject to the dual loyalties of brotherhood and clan." ¹³⁰ The same solidarity could be achieved through craft guilds like those mentioned by Snegarev. "Sufi orders control the surviving Muslim guilds and new guilds organised along traditional lines. Such is the case, for example, of the guild of taxi drivers in Tashkent." ¹³¹

We witness a curious and little known, but nevertheless successful effort of the non-official, popular Islam (especially of the Soufi [*sic*] brotherhoods) to penetrate the Soviet system... generally it consists in superimposing an Islamic organization - often secret, based on traditional initiation - on the existing Soviet structures: collective farms, professional trade unions, etc. ¹³²

Rakowska-Harmstone noted that "religious community rituals connected with traditional crafts also apparently survive," ¹³³ without linking this to Sufism.

Coupled with this 'clannic' aspect of Sufism was the principle of *taqiyya*: "[Sufi groups'] underground development appears as the expression of a kind of socio-political darwinism, probably enhanced by the *taqiyya* tradition." ¹³⁴

Caucasian highlanders are naturally more aggressive and less cautious than the Turkestanis: the latter are more inclined to mistrust and secrecy, and often practise *taqiya* (*sic*)... the inner life of the brotherhoods is difficult to penetrate... because they have at their disposal the generalised practise of *taqiya*... the sanctioned right to apostasy or dissimulation. ¹³⁵

^{vii} Wimbush (1986) p.228, Rakowska-Harmstone (1983) p.55, Bociurkiw (1980) p.19

An example of such behaviour was the formula “Komsomol in this world, Murid in the next,” a phrase which often occurred in Western texts.¹³⁶

Another source of strength was internal structure. Sufi organisations usually consist of bodies of disciples grouped around a teacher whose prescriptions regarding spiritual or physical exercises are followed complicitly. In Rakowska-Harmstone’s words, “Each *ishan* (or Sheikh) formed the nucleus of a group of followers known as *murids*, bound to the master by intricate rites, blind obedience and a dance ritual known as *zikr*.”¹³⁷ The discipline imposed by the teacher-pupil relationship was among the Sufis’ greatest assets.

Sufi *tariqas* are tightly-knit religious organizations with a strong leadership and a disciplined apparatus... they are well-suited to clandestine activity and have survived all attempts by the Soviet regime to infiltrate them, to win them over or to destroy them.¹³⁸

The *tariqa* represent perfectly structured hierarchical organisations, endowed with an iron discipline which is certainly stronger than that of the Communist Party.¹³⁹

Sufi groups in certain ways resembled the ‘cells’ of the Communist Party, a claim made by Bennigsen and Wimbush in relation to a group known as the Hairy Ishans, an offshoot of the Yasawiyya.¹⁴⁰ Comparing the experiences of the Afghan and Soviet Communists, Roy noted “[Sufis’] aptitude for clandestine activity, their discipline and team spirit, their capacity to organise a parallel clergy” which rendered them “dangerous” since their tight-knit groups meant that they were “easily transformed into commandos.”¹⁴¹

Sufis were held responsible for maintaining a network of unregistered institutions, notably mosques and madrasas. Wimbush mentioned “thousands of underground mosques that dot the countryside of Soviet Muslim regions,”¹⁴² Bennigsen “a large network of clandestine mosques... and of underground religious schools.”¹⁴³ “The existence of unofficial mullahs also means the existence of unofficial mosques, and it is well documented that many such mosques exist, particularly in the rural areas.”¹⁴⁴

Bennigsen identified several categories of unofficial mosque. These included redundant mosques illegally reopened; “prayer houses” usually in a cemetery or near a shrine; “‘private’ clandestine prayer-houses, open to all believers, which are located in the homes of Sufi sheikhs” and secret meeting places used only by Sufi adepts.¹⁴⁵

As well as performing religious rites, Sufis propagated Islam via two main media. The first was the underground school where Arabic was taught. This was essential for the perpetuation of the cult, since Arabic could otherwise be studied only at university and religious instruction only obtained at the two colleges in Bokhara and Tashkent, which had a low intake and a high entry requirement. A description of the Sufis’ educational activity was given by Bennigsen and Wimbush.

Since religious instruction is forbidden in Soviet schools... parallel Islam has quite naturally come to assume an educational as well as a religious role... A full page article in *Sovet Ozbekistoni* published on 26 September 1982 complained, for example, that an illegal “religious learning course” taught by a “false mullah” was attracting believers “as light attracts moths”; in this activity we may assume that Sufis are particularly important... In Tajikistan and in Kirghizia Sufis are identified openly as being responsible for the establishment of religious and Quranic schools.¹⁴⁶

It was uncertain how effective such education was: Wimbush¹⁴⁷ suggested that unofficial mullahs had a limited knowledge of doctrine and Kocaoglu worried that “knowledge of true Islam is diminishing.”¹⁴⁸ The present writer has spoken to a Turkmen academic who as a child on a collective farm during the War was taught the prayers, which he partially remembered but which held no spiritual significance for him.^{viii} Most reports stated only that religious education was undertaken. By implication it was organised.

Another medium for the propagation of Islam was the custom of pilgrimage. Kocaoglu noted that “the Soviet government sends only 18 to 20 persons out of 50 million Soviet Muslims annually to Mecca.”¹⁴⁹ Pilgrimage to a holy place within Central Asia was an alternative to Hajj. A number of holy places existed, usually associated with the tombs of saints, clan ancestors, biblical figures, or mythical and pre-Islamic figures. Sufi activity was supposed to be centred on these sites. According to

^{viii} The same source denied that his teacher had had formal religious training, or was a Sufi.

Rakowska-Harmstone, "*Mazars* usually have a guardian, in most cases an unofficial mullah or *ishan*, an influential member of a local community who dispenses religious 'propaganda'." ¹⁵⁰

Sufis in the Soviet Union control and maintain holy places... The location of holy places in the territory of the Muslim republics represents a kind of religious geography of nationalism which can be charted according to the location of the Sufi brotherhoods... today more than ever, Muslim holy places controlled by Sufi brotherhoods, and not the few officially sanctioned "working mosques", are the real spiritual centres of Islam. ¹⁵¹

The cult of saints and its associated custom of pilgrimage was "probably the most important element of popular Islam in Central Asia." ¹⁵² Because of this it provided the principle location for the dissemination of religious teaching by Sufis. Holy places were "an excellent forum for the brotherhoods to influence the Muslim masses." ¹⁵³

Because of this strategic position, Sufis have unique and unlimited access to non-adepts who observe the cult of saints. They stand therefore at the critical juncture where popular belief meets clandestine organisation, where ordinary Muslims come into contact with the highly motivated and rigidly disciplined Sufis... Soviet sources agree that during a pilgrimage, the holy place is the main contact place between the "Sufi fanatics" and the population - believers and unbelievers alike. ¹⁵⁴

Because of this direct contact with the Muslim masses at shrines, "sufi brotherhoods, whatever the content of their teaching, continued to be felt by the people as closer to their worries and needs [than the 'ulema]." ¹⁵⁵ Sufis had "deep roots in the community" ¹⁵⁶ and "they enjoy solid, and possibly even growing support from the Muslim masses." ¹⁵⁷ "It is clear in areas where Tariqats exist, they hold the actual authority over the social group." ¹⁵⁸ Given that "The *tariqas* thus exercise a deep influence on public opinion," ¹⁵⁹ their teachings were of importance.

Religious observance did not necessarily imply opposition to the Soviet regime, but co-operation with the state involved making a number of religious compromises. This Sufis were thought unwilling to do; "the goal of the secret organisations is to maintain the true faith." ¹⁶⁰ "They are struggling to build a world which is sanctified by faith, in which Islam penetrates every aspect of public and private life." ¹⁶¹ This brought Sufis into direct conflict with the state. d'Encausse believed that "the Tariqats are in

fact *mass organisations* utterly estranged from the ideology of the Soviet system.”¹⁶² Bociurkiw described them as “strongly nationalist, anti-Soviet.”¹⁶³ Bennigsen and Wimbush stated “members of the *tarika* are openly hostile to the Soviet establishment.”¹⁶⁴

The Sufi brotherhoods appear to have no other “ideology” apart from a very conservative form of Islam: and their goals are those of the traditional *jihad*, or “Holy War”, which fights against sin, the infidel rulers and the “bad Muslims” who serve them.¹⁶⁵

Their ideology, a legacy of Shamil’s *jihad*, is a vague but powerful appeal to build a world entirely sanctified by faith, which implies, of course, the expulsion of the Russian *Kafirs*.¹⁶⁶

Sufism was presented as inherently anti-Russian, a situation which some saw as a natural feature of this branch of Islam. “Sufism has always played a big role in anti-colonialist movements.”¹⁶⁷ Many shrines were the tombs of leaders of C19th resistance to the Russians. Whereas previously the anti-Russian revolts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the Basmachi movement, were depicted as being of nationalist inspiration, these were now interpreted as religious revolts.

All movements of armed resistance to the Russian conquerors from the late eighteenth century to the last Chechen uprising in 1942-3 have been led or supported by Sufi brotherhoods.¹⁶⁸

These movements had been inspired, it was held, by the Naqshbandiyya, an order which remained strong in the region and “which from the eighteenth century has represented the hard core of Muslim resistance to Russian conquest.”¹⁶⁹ Other groups, notably the Hairy Ishans,^{ix} had developed which also evinced an antipathy to the Soviets.

Broxup suggested that Hairy Ishans were responsible for the assassination of Sultan Ibrahimov, Chairman of the Kirghiz Council of Ministers.¹⁷⁰ Wimbush, noting calls for the elimination of “religious terrorists,” conceded that there was no evidence for such a link. He did however consider Sufi groups a natural haven for political dissenters.

^{ix} Kocaoglu (1980) p.151 attributed the expression “Komsomol in this world, Murid in the next” to this group.

Sufi organisations, as in the past, are natural poles toward which dissident Soviet Muslims can gravitate. The Sufis alone can offer clandestine organizations, whose followers are characterised by their zealous commitment to Islam and their rigid discipline, to the Soviet Islamic dissident. In times of crisis, the brotherhoods have been the catalysts for potent anti-Russian and anti-Soviet movements, and they could become so again.¹⁷¹

Sufism preserved Central Asian distinctiveness by encouraging and facilitating behaviour patterns linked to Islam, and was itself an integral part of Central Asian culture. Western readers were reminded that the term 'parallel' Islam was a misnomer since Sufism did not depart from Islamic orthodoxy. This explained the half-hearted condemnations of 'parallel' phenomena by the 'ulema. One source even claimed that the Mufti of Tashkent was a member of the Naqshbandiyya.¹⁷²

Central Asian culture, defined by Islam, remained strong in rural regions and was being rediscovered by urban elites in the process known as *mirasism*. Sufism served to strengthen the internal dynamic of Central Asian society as it articulated itself as distinct to the Soviet whole.

Islam colours the content of the socialisation of Central Asian youth and provides the link between the traditional past and contemporary self-assertion and between the modernized elites and the still conservative masses. In so far as it is the identifying characteristic of the new elites, Islam legitimises the political system which is the elites' power base.¹⁷³

The basis of political action in Central Asia was Islam. The development of Soviet Islam, particularly whether it would take on a 'militant' aspect, became a crucial component in predicting the future shape of the USSR.

If the issues surrounding Soviet Muslims in the next few decades can in any sense be considered to be "Muslim issues," then they must be thought of as issues of import to the entire Muslim world rather than as isolated regional trends. How Soviet Muslims themselves respond to the variety of political and social pressures upon them in this period will go far toward determining the future of the Soviet Union as the last great multinational empire. The response of Muslims abroad to these same issues could have a major impact on the quality of the dialogue between the Russian centre and the Soviet Muslim borderlands.¹⁷⁴

The relationship between Soviet and non-Soviet Islam came under scrutiny.

6.vi) Soviet and non-Soviet Islam

A number of articles bore exclusively on relations between Muslims inside and beyond Soviet borders. Attention was paid to the potential influence of the USSR over non-Soviet Muslims and the part the 'ulema played in Soviet propaganda. Increasingly though it was the flow of ideas the other way, from the Middle East inwards, which attracted Western interest.

Central Asia's role in Soviet foreign policy as a stepping stone into the developing world was expressed by Rakowska-Harmstone.

The new importance of Central Asia in Moscow's foreign policy came to the fore in the sixties and seventies, with the quest for influence in the Third World, specifically in the Muslim Middle East, and with the quarrel with China. Central Asia is a part of the Third World, Muslim and Asian, which in Soviet eyes can serve as a model for all others.¹⁷⁵

Others averred that

[After 1967] For the first time Moscow began to project the Soviet Muslims as representatives of a different Soviet Union; not an atheistic and Marxist Soviet Union, but one which was partly Muslim.¹⁷⁶

The Kremlin plan presents the USSR to the Muslim world not only as Islam's 'best friend', but as a great Muslim power.¹⁷⁷

The 'ulema were instrumental in this project, projecting Central Asia as a model for development and increasing Moscow's international standing. They were charged with convincing Muslim societies that the position of Islam was safe within the Soviet system.

They must testify by their presence, by the beauty of their Khalats [traditional robes] and of their well-trimmed beards, as well as by their excellent knowledge of Arabic that Islam is alive and happy.¹⁷⁸

Rakowska-Harmstone observed that

The Muslim clergy's activities abroad aim at three important objectives: firstly, to convince fellow believers abroad that Soviet Muslims have indeed achieved both prosperity and religious freedom under socialism; secondly, to gain a position of influence in the international Muslim community (basing their claims to leadership on the medieval glories of Central Asian Islam); and thirdly, to mobilize support for Soviet foreign policy.¹⁷⁹

Foreign trips by senior ‘ulema aimed at inducing a pro-Soviet stance among non-Soviet Muslims. Akiner described Babakhanov as an “ambassador of the Soviet government.”¹⁸⁰ Bennigsen asserted that “Religious leaders are... itinerant ambassadors abroad... As propagandists they are certainly more effective than the official Soviet Russian propagandists.”¹⁸¹ Dawisha and d’Encausse counted thirteen foreign trips made by Soviet ‘ulema between 1972 and 1978.¹⁸² Conferences on Islamic themes, such as the contribution of Imam al-Bukhari to Islamic civilization, were organised. According to Bennigsen and Broxup, six were held between 1970 and 1979.¹⁸³ The limitations of this policy were revealed in 1980, when the majority of delegates invited to a Tashkent conference refused to attend in protest at Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. Leaders of the Spiritual Directorates, excepting Babakhanov, were subsequently dismissed. This was taken as a sign of government control of the ‘ulema.

The irony of the government’s use of the ‘ulema as a propaganda tool was that it forced Moscow to tolerate Islam at home, and even to support it by for instance subsidising the restoration of historic monuments like the tomb of Ahmed Yassawi - a Sufi holy place. “Official Islam contributes to the rehabilitation of the national culture of the Muslim nationalities.”¹⁸⁴ Soviet Islam was “a double-edged sword.”¹⁸⁵ The international standing of the Soviet ‘ulema increased Islam’s domestic prestige, strengthening the concept of Ummah as a community most of whose members lived outside the USSR and deepening the rift between Russians and Central Asians.

Soviet Muslims are deeply conscious of belonging to the Dar ul-Islam.¹⁸⁶

Although China continued to be seen as a potential threat to Soviet hegemony in Central Asia,^x more attention was paid to relations between Central Asia and the Middle East.

Central Asia was closed to visitors from China but not those from the Middle East. Soviet foreign policy towards the region had brought large numbers of people to

^x e.g. **Bennigsen & Broxup** (1983); **Wimbush** (1985), (1986). **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1979) p.122 quotes, in Russian, a saying ‘from the bazaar of Central Asia’: “Wait till the Chinese come, they’ll show them.”

Central Asia both as members of official delegations and as students. The Iron Curtain was permeable.

Central Asia in particular has become an important training centre for political and military cadres from abroad... The dropping of the Iron Curtain and the flow of foreign Muslims into Central Asia also presented an unexpected but serious danger. Middle Eastern radicals who visit the USSR may be great admirers of the Soviet Union, but they are dubious Marxists.¹⁸⁷

There are now approximately 25,000 Afghan students in the USSR.... Many of these Afghans are admittedly communists, but there are also large numbers of Muslim fundamentalists among them. These Afghan students, some of whom are Uzbek speakers, have been able to explain the actions and motivations of the Afghan Mujahideens.¹⁸⁸

The opening of Central Asia... to outside Muslim influences offers Soviet Muslims an alternative both to Russian socialism and to Chinese socialism. The natural and logical source of Muslim inspiration lies in the Muslim Middle East rather than in China.¹⁸⁹

The 'Muslim Middle East' was in the later 1970s in a state of ferment and according to Bennigsen, "It is inconceivable that Soviet Muslims can remain unaffected by the turmoil just across their borders."¹⁹⁰ Afghanistan and Iran were seen as sources of destabilising influences. The linkage between Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia was explicit in the title of Bennigsen's *Mullahs, Mujahidin and Soviet Muslims*.

Though the change is hardly yet noticeable, a turning point in the history of Soviet Islam came in 1978, with two major external events: the downfall of the Shah of Iran and the April (*Saur*) Communist revolution in Afghanistan.... Before 1978, as far as the USSR was concerned, the Middle East was a relatively stable area... the revolutions in Iran and Afghanistan, followed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, changed dramatically this peaceful picture. They destabilised not only their own countries but the entire Middle East, transforming this relatively quiet territory into a boiling revolutionary cauldron... an area from which various subversive and radical ideologies may penetrate and contaminate Soviet Islam.¹⁹¹

That ideas informing the Muslim world might be attractive to Soviet Muslims was confirmed by the sense of Islamic Ummah already asserted and by cross-border links. The USSR was, in Wimbush's phrase, a "borderland Empire"¹⁹² As many, sometimes more, members of Soviet nationalities lived beyond the borders. This was illustrated in an article in which photographs of Iranian and Soviet Turkmen were juxtaposed. Both

wore the same woollen hat, the same robe and similar beards. The pictures were entitled 'ethnic brethren.'¹⁹³ The text beneath read

the sense of kinship among Soviets, Iranians and Afghans is reinforced by the fact that members of the same tribe are separated only by mere political frontiers.¹⁹⁴

It was thought that people of similar ethnic, linguistic or tribal origin would make common cause. This understanding seemed to have been borne out following the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan.

Many Soviet troops who moved into Afghanistan in 1978 were of Central Asian origin. These had rapidly been withdrawn and replaced by Slavs. Although Olcott said

there is little reason to assume that Soviet Muslims were hesitant to support the spread of Soviet-style government into Afghanistan... Many Soviet Muslims have undoubtedly found the Afghani resistance disconcerting and difficult to understand, since they do not perceive the same tension between Islam and communism that the rebels do.¹⁹⁵

to most, the withdrawal of Soviet Muslims illustrated the dangers to the Red Army of a Muslim majority, emphasising Muslim 'unreliability'. Bennigsen alleged that "Soviet Muslims were submitted to systematic religious and political 'intoxication' by the Afghans,"¹⁹⁶ suggesting that they were susceptible to anti-Soviet ideologies emanating from outside the USSR.

That the Afghan mujahidin's message of Islamist resistance to Communism should find resonance in Central Asia was explained by several factors. Cross-border ethnic ties were one. Another was the supposedly extreme conservatism of Soviet Islam as preserved in its 'parallel' Sufi variant. Although French Islamist Olivier Roy drew a distinction between 'traditionalist' and 'Islamist/fundamentalist' (used interchangeably) camps within the mujahidin, such niceties were rarely observed. Islamic 'fundamentalism' or 'revivalism' was perceived in the West as being backwards-looking and conservative in character. The traditionalism of Central Asian Islam made it susceptible to fundamentalism:

One of the key sets of ideas which could strike responsive chords in Central Asia is a fundamentalist religious revivalism which would reinforce the already existing trend in Central Asian republics.¹⁹⁷

Rural Muslims' commitment to Islam as a religion is much stronger [than that of the urban elite] and thus their degree of responsiveness to the fundamentalist Islamic message is much higher.¹⁹⁸

Soviet Muslim territories - with their long Islamic tradition - are similar to other parts of the Muslim world where a new upsurge of Islamic awareness is evident... it would be a mistake to believe that events in Afghanistan and Iran are contributing to the closed society of Central Asia something that was not already there in substance.¹⁹⁹

Comparisons were also drawn between the Afghan mujahidin, the Basmachi movement and the Murid Wars.^{xi} Although Rywkin insisted that "The Basmachi cavalry is not about to descend into the valleys and cities of Central Asia to challenge the Russians,"²⁰⁰ Roy suggested that the Afghans were giving a new life to the concept of armed Islamic resistance and a new social dynamism to Islam which the Basmachis lacked.

The Afghan resistance does possess a political, military and even cultural dynamism which is making its mark in the contemporary process of Islamic revival - sufficient to distinguish it from the *basmachi* movements of Central Asia which, faced with the triumphant bolshevism of the 1920s, could only be seen as representing the last stand of an ossified society.²⁰¹

It was now Islam which was seen as dynamic, while Communism was 'ossified'. Imart, who studied politics in Algiers and frequently compared Soviet Asia to French Algeria, wrote of "the generalized loss of the Leninist faith" resulting from "the growing corruption due to economic chaos, civic licentiousness and 'I-couldn't-care-less' attitudes [which] induced disillusioned people to turn to religion as an unshakeable, absolute moral code of behaviour."²⁰² Ro'i talked of "disillusionment"²⁰³ with Marxism-Leninism, characterised as "stale", "sterile" or even as "pseudoculture."²⁰⁴

After decades of enforced conformity to stale Russian Marxism, Soviet Muslims have nothing to export in the political domain. To the contrary, it is they who are likely to be influenced by ideas, programs, and ideologies - perhaps even by

^{xi} e.g. Bennigsen & Broxup (1983) p.114; Bennigsen & Lemercier-Quelquejay (1984) pp.182-206

models of political warfare and guerrilla activity - moving northward from a “destabilized” and radicalized Middle East.²⁰⁵

After decades of enforced conformity to the Russian Marxism-Leninism, Soviet Muslims live in an ideological void and are likely to be influenced by ideas and ideologies from abroad - from the most conservative religious conservatism of a Khomeini or a Gulbuddin [Hekmatyar, leader of the Afghan Hizb-i Islami] to the revolutionary radicalism of an ‘Ali Shariyati... or the doctrine of the Egyptian Ikhwan al-Muslimin.²⁰⁶

Ideas imputed to the Afghans and Iranians were thought to be entering the USSR by several means. Fraternisation between Afghans and Central Asians at the beginning of the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan was said to have resulted in the rapid withdrawal of Central Asian troops. This channel of “infection” had been closed but others remained. Bennigsen and Wimbush observed that the Sufi orders in Afghanistan, which Roy described as instrumental in resisting the Russians, were the same as those of Central Asia. This would aid the transmission of ideas across the border from Afghanistan into the USSR.

is it possible to identify contacts between Soviet Sufi organisations and the same Muslim brotherhoods across Soviet borders? If such contacts do exist, they are probably across the Afghan border with the Afghan Naqshbandis and Qadiris. Initiative for such contacts would almost certainly lie with the Afghans.²⁰⁷

Hizb-i Islami and Jamiat-e Islami both claimed to have members within the USSR. Bennigsen and Wimbush asserted that such claims were probably more than rhetorical. Although Hizb-i Islami had an uneasy relationship with Sufi groups, the Jamiat was according to Roy infused with Sufism. Both parties were ‘fundamentalist.’ Imart wrote of “an ‘afghan minded’ minority, centred on, or linked to, sufi sects [with] the potentiality for the implementation of a pre-insurrectionary mentality.”²⁰⁸ Broxup stated Jamiat-e Islami claimed 2,500 members in Tadjikistan alone.

Even if the claim is exaggerated (which there is no reason to suspect) and Jamiat-e Islami has only 25 instead of 2,500 members in Tadjikistan, they could still provide the nucleus for an active nationalist-religious resistance movement inside the USSR which could threaten Russian control over the Muslim borderlands.²⁰⁹

Soviet sources praising the border guards and reports of attacks on frontier positions lent credence to the allegation.

Perhaps more important than direct links between Central Asians and Muslims elsewhere was the influence of printed matter and of radio. A number of authors stated that copies of the Qur'an had been obtained from Afghanistan by Central Asian troops which were traded in an "active" black market.²¹⁰

Hayit asserted that Central Asians had obtained Qur'ans in exchange for medicine and added "Sometimes the war password was given to the Afghans in return for religious books. At times even weapons were used as payments for religious literature."²¹¹ He gave no evidence or sources for these claims, which appeared elsewhere,²¹² and it would *prima facie* seem hard to understand what use Central Asians, who were unable to read Arabic script, could have for literature produced in Afghanistan. However, there seemed to be a considerable demand for Islamic materials within the USSR.

Dawisha and d'Encausse mentioned the importation of Qur'ans from Afghanistan and asserted that an illegal publishing house in Tashkent had issued "thousands of copies of an unauthorised book 'about the Islamic faith'."²¹³ This may be the pamphlet written in Arabic and Uzbek identified by Bennigsen and Wimbush, which they suggested was issued by Naqshbandis: "'Islam dini haqida' (About the Islamic Faith) advises believers to avoid contact with 'non-believers' (which implies with communists and Russians)."²¹⁴ This information, which Bennigsen and Wimbush sourced to *Sovet Özbekistoni*, appeared in *The Observer*, whence Dawisha and d'Encausse had it.

As well as the traffic in Qur'ans and the local production of texts, Bennigsen drew attention to the production in Afghanistan and Pakistan of books specifically aimed at a Soviet audience and smuggled across the border. Hizb-i Islami in particular was involved in this activity. Bennigsen reproduced the covers of three works written in Russian.²¹⁵ These included a life of Mohammed and a work by the Pakistani founder of Jamiat-e Islami, Mawlana Mawdudi. Such literature it was alleged penetrated far into Central Asia, although exactly what its reach was is impossible to determine.

The content of this literature "focuses primarily on Islam rather than on current political issues, nationality problems, or 'Soviet colonialism'."²¹⁶ Bennigsen continued

by stating that the mujahidin were attempting to connect their war against the Russians to those of nineteenth century Caucasian and Central Asian leaders. As evidence of this he reproduced the front page of a Peshawar newspaper written in Uzbek and Dari, using Arabic script throughout, which featured a picture of Shamil, who it described as “the first to lead a guerrilla Holy War against the infidels.” “There is no doubt as to the target of publications of this kind... we should not be surprised if this material eventually turns up in Soviet Central Asia.”²¹⁷

If ‘fundamentalist’ ideas entered the USSR from Afghanistan via personal contacts and literature, they entered from Iran in a form which was harder for the authorities to control, radio. “Where once Iranians listened to propaganda broadcasts from Radio Baku, today it is the Soviet Azeris and Turkmen who follow with interest the broadcasts from Tabriz, Tehran and Gorgan.”²¹⁸

Iranian broadcasts, particularly those featuring speeches by Khomeini, were reportedly recorded inside the USSR, with cassettes distributed among the faithful. Although such reports exclusively related to Turkmenistan, the information was presented as being applicable over a wider area.²¹⁹ Little was said of the languages broadcasts were made in, though Bennigsen stated that in addition to Farsi, programmes existed in Azeri and Turkmen.²²⁰ Rakowska-Harmstone asserted that “Air waves carry foreign programmes in familiar languages and with familiar cultural content, and there are listeners in rural areas.”²²¹

Evidence of the influence of Iranian radio came from Azerbaijan, where Gaidar Aliev, head of the republic’s KGB before becoming republican First Secretary, called for increased vigilance against ‘ideological sabotage’. His successor as KGB chief, Zia Yusuf Zade (or Iusuf-zade), warned of infiltration of the republic by ‘agents’ from abroad.^{222xii} Olcott observed that “This single report from Azerbaijan is the only evidence of any short-term political impact of the Iranian revolution or Islamic fundamentalism on political life in the Muslim regions,” and suggested that “it may have been nothing more than camouflage for an attempt by First Secretary of the Azeri

^{xii} That both men were Azeris weakens the view that Russians dominated non-Russians.

Communist Party Aliev's faction to further strengthen its hold on the local apparatus."²²³

Several writers commented upon the attractiveness of Khomeinism for Central Asians. This was set forth by Bennigsen in a 1980 article in *Problems of Communism*, repeated almost word for word three years later in *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State*. Bennigsen believed "The influence on Soviet Islam of the events in Iran may be deeper and, in the long run, more dangerous than the guerrilla war in Afghanistan."²²⁴

Khomeinist Iran was similar to what Bennigsen called the 'theocratic state' established in the North Caucasus by Uzun Hajji during the Civil War which had left an "indelible impression" amongst Soviet Muslims.²²⁵ Bennigsen even asserted that Khomeini bore a physical resemblance to Uzun.²²⁶ Although Uzun represented a purely Caucasian phenomenon, a theme running through much of Bennigsen's work is the idea that the Chechens, as devout, Sufi-inspired and the most anti-Russian of Soviet Muslims, had by their exile to Central Asia acted as a conduit of North Caucasian religious concepts into the region. This would aid the spread of Khomeini's ideas, which would also be given a boost by the 'fact' that "Iran has always enjoyed, and still enjoys, an immense prestige in the Turco-Iranian world, not only because of its unique and advanced culture but also because of its long tradition of statesmanship."²²⁷

Four aspects of Khomeinism were seen as being especially attractive to Central Asians. The first was its anti-imperialism. In the case of Iran this was directed against the USA, but "it is easy to draw a parallel between the 'foreign imperialism' of the Americans in Iran and the 'imperialism' of the Russians in the Caucasus and Central Asia."²²⁸ "It is highly likely that many Soviet Muslims interpret the Iranian events... as an increase of local authority against outside influences - and it is not much of a leap to transfer the lesson to the context of the multinational empire that is the Soviet Union."²²⁹

The suppression of the Tudeh illustrated the strength of Islam against Communism. "Some Soviet Muslims, in fact, saw the repression of the Tudeh Party,

one of the oldest communist parties in the Muslim world, as evidence that communism could be defeated by militant Islam.”²³⁰

The Iranian Revolution was an anti-imperialist, anti-Communist and populist movement “to replace the old corrupt bureaucracy and to bring to power a new category of younger leaders of more popular origin... Iran presents the picture of a ‘revolutionary’ country where ‘something is on the move’,”²³¹ contrasting with the inertia of Soviet society.

The search for cultural authenticity which was an essential component of the slogan ‘Neither East nor West but Islam’ chimed with the Central Asian urge to preserve indigenous culture in the face of Sovietisation, and the search for cultural roots expressed by the term *mirasism*.

The details of Khomeini’s ideology, particularly his concept of *Vilayet al-Faqih*, the political supremacy of a senior ‘alim, running against Central Asian tradition which had subordinated the ‘ulema to the temporal authorities, were not discussed. Although Khomeini’s teachings arose from a Shi’ite doctrinal base and had only been successfully exported to other Shi’ite communities, this “would not be a great obstacle”²³² to the spread of such ideas into Central Asia since in the USSR the dividing line between Shi’ism and Sunnism had become blurred. “The differences between Sunni and Shi’a Muslims in the Soviet Union have dwindled to insignificance, while Islam has survived and flourished.”²³³

It was enough that the Iranian revolution was motivated by ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ and formed a part of a continuum of religiously-articulated political action embracing such groups as the Ikhwan al-Musulmin, the Afghan mujahidin and Pakistan’s Jama’at-i Islami which was sweeping the Muslim world of which Central Asia was a part.

While Olcott suggested that “the arguments of a Khomeini or even of the Muslim Brethren are likely to be very difficult for [Soviets] to understand, let alone endorse,”²³⁴ the general view was that Soviet Muslims were the same as those beyond their borders,

more Muslim than Soviet. The articulation of Central Asian identity was a Muslim one. The 'fundamentalist' message which rejected Western ideologies spoke to Central Asians directly in a way that Marxism, the acceptance of which was essential to Soviet patriotism, could not.

Western analysts have argued that this revival of Islamic fundamentalism is seen by the Soviet leadership as a threat to the security of their multinational state, and that the quiescent religious identity of the Soviet Muslims will be awakened by the resonance of the religious revivals on their borders.²³⁵

Although Olcott warned that "such arguments are unsubstantiated,"²³⁶ hers was a minority view.

The only conceivable future is one of conflict, given the totally contradictory world view and the continuing mutual suspicions, compounded by the political implications of the Soviet Muslim population's adherence to its Muslim identity. Until now the Islamic fundamentalist revival seems to have had no direct contact with or influence upon Muslims within the USSR, although they are clearly aware of its existence and strength... The question that clearly troubles the Soviet central Establishment is what will happen if and when the barrier between the two forces - at home and abroad - is breached....²³⁷

Sufis view Soviet power as the devil incarnate... If the current expansion of Islamic fundamentalism is stopped and reversed - which means, among other things, the final defeat of the Afghan resistance, a change of regimes in Pakistan and Iran, and the liquidation of the Muslim Brothers movement in the Arab countries - then it is possible, but not probable, that the same conservative radical trends represented by the Sufi brotherhoods will ebb in the Soviet Union. If, on the other hand, fundamentalism prospers abroad, it is likely to prosper in the Soviet Union as well.²³⁸

The 1980s have opened under the sign of Islam. They have also opened under the sign of a new ideological confrontation. Until now the world was dominated by the confrontation between Communism and Liberalism, between East and West. At the end of the century, the confrontation has shifted, it pits Islam against that which is foreign, against value systems based on materialism and the historical experience of the Western world....

The crisis which is rocking the whole of the Muslim world cannot but affect the USSR... it also aggravates the national tensions of the USSR. The stand-off between Islam and the Western world which this crisis represents and from which the USSR profits or tries to profit menaces the USSR and its cohesion just as much as it menaces the rest of the world. The USSR can no more escape this conflict than can the rest of the world, since it is played out on its own soil, even if it is still muffled. The Muslim question of the USSR - which is part of the national question of that country - will in the future leave the ranks of the exclusively Soviet to become a part of the awakening of the Muslim world and of the reconquest of its political and ideological autonomy.²³⁹

6.vii) Conclusion

At Gorbachev's accession the majority opinion was that if an internal threat to the Soviet Union existed, it would come from Central Asia. A combination of high birth-rates, low mobility, political and economic frustration and distinct identity based in Islamic faith created a potentially dangerous situation for the USSR. "It is the growing Islam-based modern nationalist spirit *combined* with this demographic explosion that is the most important threat to Moscow."²⁴⁰

The few scholars such as Akiner, Lubin or Olcott who in the early 1980s were beginning to question this analysis were not yet sufficiently influential to provide a counter to a view which remained in currency through the break-up of the USSR.

Western thought was unprepared for the fact that as the Soviet political system collapsed at the end of the 1980s, ethnic interfighting first broke out between 'subject peoples,' Uzbeks and Metskhetians in the Ferghana. Conflict was not between Russians and Muslims but among Muslim themselves.

It was in the Baltic, a wealthy area in Soviet terms, that economic and cultural grievances were expressed as anti-Russianism, as Baltic peoples perceived Russians to be 'taking over' their republics and exporting local wealth to other regions. Central Asia by contrast was not being 'swamped' by Russians and was a net beneficiary of Soviet fiscal policy. Contrary to expectations, the fact that traditional lifestyle patterns had substantially been able to survive unhindered after sixty years of 'persecution' illustrated less the strength of resistance to Soviet norms than that there was perceived to be no inherent conflict between the Soviet state and Muslim identity.

¹ Wimbush (1985a) p.xxi

² d'Encausse (1978) p.54

³ Johnson, P. (1984) *A History of the Modern World: From 1917 to the 1980s*, London: Weidenfield & Nicholson. Cited in Wimbush (1986) p.221

⁴ Lewis *et.al.* (1978) p.355

⁵ Rakowska-Harmstone (1977) p.274

⁶ Bennigsen (1971) pp.173/4

⁷ Wimbush (1986) p.221

⁸ Rakowska-Harmstone (1974)

⁹ Lewis *et.al.* (1979) p.412

¹⁰ Rakowska-Harmstone (1974) p.7

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- ¹¹ *ibid.* p.7
- ¹² **Rywkin** (1975) p.278
- ¹³ *ibid.* p.78
- ¹⁴ **Wimbush** (1986) p.220 The reader was referred to Bennigsen *op.cit.*
- ¹⁵ **Wimbush** (1985b) p.153
- ¹⁶ **Treadgold** (1986) p.385
- ¹⁷ **Rywkin** (1975) p.280
- ¹⁸ **Karklins** (1986) p.77
- ¹⁹ **Critchlow** (1975) p.366
- ²⁰ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1977) p.212
- ²¹ **Karklins** (1986) p.89
- ²² **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1977) p.287
- ²³ **Rywkin** (1975) p.283
- ²⁴ *ibid.*
- ²⁵ **Karklins** (1986) p.80
- ²⁶ *ibid.* p.81
- ²⁷ **Rywkin** (1975) p.279
- ²⁸ **Wimbush** (1986) p.231
- ²⁹ **Wimbush** (1985b) p.155
- ³⁰ **Lewis et.al.** (1978) p.356
- ³¹ **Lewis & Rowland** (1979) p.413
- ³² *ibid.* p.415
- ³³ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985b) p.27
- ³⁴ **Lewis et.al.** (1978) p.376
- ³⁵ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1977) p.277
- ³⁶ **Lewis & Rowland** (1979) p.423
- ³⁷ **Lewis et.al.** (1978) p.381
- ³⁸ **Lewis et.al.** (1978) p.381
- ³⁹ **Karklins** (1986) p.96
- ⁴⁰ **Lubin** (1984) p.241
- ⁴¹ **Rywkin** (1982) p.149
- ⁴² **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.37
- ⁴³ **Critchlow** (1975) p.372
- ⁴⁴ **Critchlow** (1975) p.371
- ⁴⁵ **Lubin** (1984) p.240
- ⁴⁶ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1977) p.283. citing **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1967) p.200
- ⁴⁷ **Rywkin** (1982) p.90
- ⁴⁸ *ibid.* p.84
- ⁴⁹ **Karklins** (1980) p.74
- ⁵⁰ *ibid.* pp.69 ff.
- ⁵¹ *ibid.* p.74
- ⁵² **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.48
- ⁵³ **Olcott** (1982) p.494
- ⁵⁴ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.49
- ⁵⁵ **Treadgold** (1986) p.393
- ⁵⁶ *ibid.* p.49
- ⁵⁷ *ibid.* p.47
- ⁵⁸ **d'Encausse** (1978) Chapter 8, pp.311-333
- ⁵⁹ **Rywkin** (1982) pp.84, 89
- ⁶⁰ **Bennigsen** (1981) p.96
- ⁶¹ **Rywkin** (1975) p.272
- ⁶² **Bociurkiw** (1980) p.9
- ⁶³ **Karpat** (1983) p.79
- ⁶⁴ **Rywkin** (1975) p.273 Rywkin repeated this statement word for word in *Moscow's Muslim Challenge* (1982) p.87
- ⁶⁵ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.58

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- ⁶⁶ Rakowska-Harmstone (1983) p.59
⁶⁷ Imart (1986) p.358
⁶⁸ Olcott (1982) 494/5
⁶⁹ Bennigsen (1977) p.253
⁷⁰ Bennigsen & Wimbush (1985b) p.14
⁷¹ d'Encausse (1978) p.286
⁷² Bociurkiw (1980) p.16
⁷³ d'Encausse (1978) p.286
⁷⁴ d'Encausse (1974) p.13
⁷⁵ Rakowska-Harmstone (1983) p.42
⁷⁶ Bennigsen & Wimbush (1985b) p.16
⁷⁷ Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay (1979) pp.149-150
⁷⁸ Akiner (1983) pp.34-36
⁷⁹ Bennigsen & Wimbush (1985b) pp.14-16
⁸⁰ Rakowska-Harmstone (1983) p.41
⁸¹ Bennigsen (1977) p.254
⁸² *ibid.* p.254
⁸³ Akiner (1983) p.36
⁸⁴ Bennigsen (1977) p.255
⁸⁵ *ibid.* p.254
⁸⁶ *ibid.* p.253
⁸⁷ Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay (1979) p.155
⁸⁸ Bennigsen (1977) p.249
⁸⁹ Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay (1979) p.151
⁹⁰ Bennigsen & Wimbush (1985b) p.16
⁹¹ Rakowska-Harmstone (1983) p.41
⁹² Bennigsen (1981) p.98
⁹³ Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay (1979) p.155
⁹⁴ Bennigsen (1977) p.258
⁹⁵ Dawisha & d'Encausse (1983) p.168
⁹⁶ d'Encausse (1974) p.14
⁹⁷ Imart (1986) p.354
⁹⁸ Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay (1978) p.154
⁹⁹ Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay (1979) p.156
¹⁰⁰ Imart (1986) pp.354-5
¹⁰¹ Karpat (1983) p.74
¹⁰² Bociurkiw (1980) p.19
¹⁰³ Akiner (1983) p.36
¹⁰⁴ Bennigsen & Wimbush (1985b) pp.17-18
¹⁰⁵ Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay (1979) pp.151-152
¹⁰⁶ Bociurkiw (1980) p.18
¹⁰⁷ Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay (1979) p.153
¹⁰⁸ Rakowska-Harmstone (1977) pp.285-286
¹⁰⁹ Rakowska-Harmstone (1983) p.42
¹¹⁰ Akiner (1983) p.32
¹¹¹ Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay (1978) p.154
¹¹² Bennigsen & Wimbush (1985b) p.20
¹¹³ Bennigsen & Wimbush (1975) p.139
¹¹⁴ Bennigsen (1977) p.255
¹¹⁵ Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay (1981) p.204
¹¹⁶ Kocaoglu (1983) p.147
¹¹⁷ Bennigsen (1981) p.98
¹¹⁸ Bennigsen & Wimbush (1985a) p.83
¹¹⁹ Rakowska-Harmstone (1983) p.53
¹²⁰ Bennigsen & Wimbush (1985a) pp.85-86

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- ¹²¹ **Wimbush** (1986) p.223
- ¹²² *ibid.* p.223
- ¹²³ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1975) p.139
- ¹²⁴ **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1978) p.155
- ¹²⁵ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985b) p.21
- ¹²⁶ **Broxup** (1983) p.35
- ¹²⁷ **Rywwin** (1982) p.88
- ¹²⁸ **Bennigsen** (1981) p.100
- ¹²⁹ **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1978) p.156
- ¹³⁰ *ibid.* p.157
- ¹³¹ **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1981) p.104
- ¹³² **Bennigsen** (1977) p.259
- ¹³³ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.53
- ¹³⁴ **Imart** (1986) p.364
- ¹³⁵ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985a) p.58. p.76
- ¹³⁶ c.g. **Kocaoglu** (1983) p.156; **Imart** (1986) p.359
- ¹³⁷ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.54
- ¹³⁸ **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1978) p.159
- ¹³⁹ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985b) p.21
- ¹⁴⁰ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985a) p.36
- ¹⁴¹ **Roy** (1983) p.69
- ¹⁴² **Wimbush** (1986) p.227
- ¹⁴³ **Bennigsen** (1981) p.100
- ¹⁴⁴ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.54
- ¹⁴⁵ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985a) pp.86-87
- ¹⁴⁶ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985a) pp.87-88
- ¹⁴⁷ **Wimbush** (1986) p.227
- ¹⁴⁸ **Kocaoglu** (1983) p.156
- ¹⁴⁹ *ibid.* p.149
- ¹⁵⁰ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.53
- ¹⁵¹ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985a) pp.94. 96-97
- ¹⁵² *ibid.* p.94
- ¹⁵³ **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1978) p.157
- ¹⁵⁴ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985a) pp.94-95
- ¹⁵⁵ **Imart** (1986) p.364
- ¹⁵⁶ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.54
- ¹⁵⁷ **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1978) p.159
- ¹⁵⁸ **d'Encausse** (1978) p.327
- ¹⁵⁹ **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1978) p.158
- ¹⁶⁰ **Wimbush** (1986) p.228
- ¹⁶¹ **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1978) p.158
- ¹⁶² **d'Encausse** (1978) p.327
- ¹⁶³ **Bociurkiw** (1980) p.19
- ¹⁶⁴ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1975) p.140
- ¹⁶⁵ **Bennigsen & Lemerrier-Quelquejay** (1978) p.158
- ¹⁶⁶ **Bowers** (1980) p.35
- ¹⁶⁷ **Roy** (1983) p.59
- ¹⁶⁸ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985a) p.106
- ¹⁶⁹ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1975) p.140
- ¹⁷⁰ **Broxup** (1983) p.33
- ¹⁷¹ **Wimbush** (1985) p.161
- ¹⁷² **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985a) p.45
- ¹⁷³ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) pp.80-81
- ¹⁷⁴ **Wimbush** (1985) p.166
- ¹⁷⁵ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.67

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- ¹⁷⁶ **Dawisha & d'Encausse** (1983) p.165
¹⁷⁷ **Bennigsen** (1985) p.218
¹⁷⁸ **Bennigsen** (1977) p.271
¹⁷⁹ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.72
¹⁸⁰ **Akiner** (1983) p.35
¹⁸¹ **Bennigsen** (1985) pp.218-219
¹⁸² **Dawisha & d'Encausse** (1983) p.167
¹⁸³ **Bennigsen & Broxup** (1983) pp.105-106
¹⁸⁴ **Bowers** (1980) p.40
¹⁸⁵ **Dawisha & d'Encausse** (1983) Title
¹⁸⁶ **Bennigsen** (1977) p.269
¹⁸⁷ **Bennigsen** (1985) pp. 218-219
¹⁸⁸ **Broxup** (1983) p.34
¹⁸⁹ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1979) p.126
¹⁹⁰ **Bennigsen** (1984) p.28
¹⁹¹ **Bennigsen & Broxup** (1983) pp.108-109
¹⁹² **Wimbush** (1986) p.226
¹⁹³ **Bennigsen** (1980c) p.40
¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*
¹⁹⁵ **Olcott** (1982) pp.493. 494
¹⁹⁶ **Bennigsen** (1980c) p.48
¹⁹⁷ **Bennigsen & Broxup** (1983) p.114
¹⁹⁸ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.76
¹⁹⁹ **Bennigsen** (1984) p.28
²⁰⁰ **Rywwin** (1982) p.152
²⁰¹ **Roy** (1984) p.68
²⁰² **Imart** (1986) p.368, p.355
²⁰³ **Ro'i** (1984) p.175
²⁰⁴ **Wimbush** (1986) p.220
²⁰⁵ **Bennigsen** (1980c) p.51
²⁰⁶ **Bennigsen** (1985) p.222
²⁰⁷ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985a) p.110
²⁰⁸ **Imart** (1986) p.366
²⁰⁹ **Broxup** (1983) p.34
²¹⁰ **Bennigsen** (1980c) p.48
²¹¹ **Hayit** (1985) p.148
²¹² **Bennigsen** (1984) p.35
²¹³ **Dawisha & d'Encausse** (1983) p.174
²¹⁴ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985a) p.91
²¹⁵ **Bennigsen** (1984) p.36
²¹⁶ *ibid.* p.37
²¹⁷ *ibid.* p.38
²¹⁸ **Bennigsen & Broxup** (1983) p.116
²¹⁹ e.g. **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.76; **Ro'i** (1984) p.180; **Wimbush** (1985) p.159
²²⁰ **Bennigsen** (1984) p.33
²²¹ **Rakowska-Harmstone** (1983) p.76
²²² e.g. **Olcott** (1982) p.499; **Dawisha & d'Encausse** (1983) p.175; **Bennigsen & Broxup** (1983) p.116; **Ro'i** (1984) p.167
²²³ **Olcott** (1982) pp.499-500
²²⁴ **Bennigsen & Broxup** (1983) p.115
²²⁵ *ibid.* p.115
²²⁶ **Bennigsen** (1980c) p.49
²²⁷ *ibid.* pp.49-50
²²⁸ *ibid.* p.50
²²⁹ **Bennigsen** (1984) p.33
²³⁰ *ibid.* p.33

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- ²³¹ **Bennigsen & Broxup** (1983) pp.115, 116
²³² **Bennigsen** (1980c) p.50
²³³ **Karpat** (1983) p.74
²³⁴ **Olcott** (1982) p.499
²³⁵ *ibid.* p.487
²³⁶ *ibid.* p.487
²³⁷ **Ro'i** (1984) p.175
²³⁸ **Bennigsen & Wimbush** (1985a) pp.111, 113
²³⁹ **d'Encausse** (1978) pp.343, 351 In a postscript added March 1980.
²⁴⁰ **Rywkin** (1982) p.91

Conclusion - Contexts and Outcomes: **Towards A Genealogy of Ideas**

the facts that are known are often woven into a construct or image of what is held to be Islam in the USSR.¹

I have traced the development of Western thought concerning Soviet Islam during the period from the death of Stalin to the accession of Gorbachev, describing the “construct or image” of Soviet Islam, and arguing that Soviet Central Asia was interpreted against the background of ideas concerning colonialism and modernisation. Theories of Soviet Islam were developed within the context of an assumed conflict between a coloniser and a colonised group. This dichotomy was initially couched in terms of nationalism and issues of national identity. However as the national identity of Central Asians came to be associated with their Muslim identity, the religious issue came to the fore. The debate shifted from being one of the place of Central Asians in a multi-ethnic state to a discourse about the fundamental conflict between the Marxism of the dominant Russians and the Islam of the ‘subject’ Central Asians. These were seen as irreconcilable ideologies, one of which must ultimately destroy the other. If Marx saw economic factors as the primary motivation for political action, most Western scholars of Central Asia preferred to ascribe this to ideological or even quasi-spiritual considerations. Only thus could the relative economic disadvantage of independence be reconciled with demands for home rule expressed in Western colonies.

The question remains, why and how did this particular understanding of the significance of Islam in Soviet society come to dominate all others? It is this issue which I address here.

The process by which an idea or understanding gains currency - assumes a ‘life’ - is what I refer to metaphorically as the genealogy of ideas. The question to be posed in assessing the dominant image of Soviet Islam must be ‘What gave this concept life?’ ‘What is its pedigree?’

In Islamic doctrine the validity of a teaching can be tested by tracing it to its source. Thus *hadith* are prefaced by a line of transmission linking the collator to the Prophet or to his companions. The accuracy of such a line of transmission, which includes tests of the reliability of each link in the process, authenticates the *hadith*.

Similarly the validity of a Sufi teaching is authenticated by a process of tracing it to its source. Sufi bodies possess what could almost be likened to a 'family tree' known as the *silisile*, listing master-disciple relationships from the progenitor of the teaching to the current Sheikh, thus guaranteeing that this last is the carrier of an authentic teaching as the pupil of his master, who was the pupil of *his* master and so on to the source.

Similar 'family trees' could be constructed in a Western academic context. In the case of the father-daughter relationship of Bennigsen and Broxup one can talk literally of a family tree. It would be possible by examining university enrolment lists to determine who studied under whom, and thus to trace the 'history' of a teaching. Such an undertaking would however be of limited value. The purpose of the *silisile* and the aim of the *hadith* collators is to preserve unchanged an eternal religious truth for the benefit of a tightly defined body of people engaged in similar activity. We are here concerned though with the evolution of an analysis rather than the preservation of a central body of truths, and although chains of transmission play a role in such an evolution, they are only one of the factors to be taken into consideration if we are to hope to understand what makes an idea 'what it is'.

It is this question of 'What makes an analysis what it is?' which I hope to address through the concept of genealogy. Without wishing to be drawn into the debate among behavioural scientists regarding the merits of 'nature' against 'nurture' nor wanting to appear as an apologist for deterministic theories of behaviour, I believe that the metaphor of genealogy is of use as it highlights the importance of background influences - often subliminal and of the kind that the *hadith* or *silisile* are designed to screen out - which may be used to explain the development of a particular understanding and its preferment over alternatives.

Events have shown that Cold War period understandings of Soviet Islam were substantially faulty, particularly in their predictive aspect. Dallin commented that

Logically the source of all such misperceptions and misconceptions can lie (1) with the object of our observation, (2) with the observer, or (3) with the process or method of observation and analysis. I am prepared to argue that in varying degrees all three have indeed been at fault.²

To this 'what, who and how' in the study of Central Asia might be added as a fourth source the way in which ideas are transmitted and how they are received.

i) Object

'At its most basic level, the object of study was the 'Muslim part' of the Soviet Union. Specifically, the question most usually addressed was the position of this 'Muslim part' in Soviet politics and society. Some of the reasons for this specific choice will be addressed under 'Process' below, since the choice, I contend, depended in large measure on factors independent of the object itself.

Precisely how the 'Muslim part' should be defined - by geography, by ethnicity or by quantifiable religious affiliation - is not without difficulty and might depend on the use to which the definition is being put. Nove's and Newth's "Soviet Middle East" uniquely included non-Muslim areas in its economic analysis. Other studies concentrated on Central Asia or have variously included Azerbaijan, the North Caucasus and the Middle Volga. Relatively few studies of the period dealt with specific republics. The area of study was somewhat vague and there appears to have been a tendency to avoid this problem by ignoring it. The result is that scholars may have ended up talking at cross-purposes, by for instance using evidence from the Caucasus to substantiate a point about Kazakhstan.

Obviously, it was necessary to collect data concerning Central Asia before any statement could be made regarding the region's historical, political or religious development. Here Western scholars faced a major problem. A review of *Islam in the Soviet Union* noted "it is an unfortunate feature of the present day that personal

knowledge of the area, derived from prolonged contact with it, is still ruled out by the restrictions of travel,”³ a difficulty which also affects Western scholars today. The inaccessibility of the object presented a major problem in the study of the region. Bacon was one of the few scholars who had travelled to Central Asia specifically for research, and her data were already thirty years old when *Central Asians Under Russian Rule* was published. Data had therefore to be collated from an alternative source, namely Soviet publications.

The imperative for data collection provided the motivation behind Wheeler’s periodical *Central Asian Review*, which provided English translations or in some cases digests of Soviet publications concerning Central Asia. The first (1953) volume covered a range of information concerning such topics as “Civil Aviation: its use in sowing and crop preservation”; “Culture and Political Training”; “Shipping on the Amu Darya”; “Ulug Beg, Statesman and Astronomer”; “Horse Breeding: a new type of all purpose animal”; “Central Asia and the Russian People”; and “The Position of Women.” The aim of collating this information was, according to the *Review*’s first editorial “to present a coherent picture of current political, social and material developments in the five Soviet Socialist Republics of Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan, Kirghizstan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan.”⁴

Wheeler highlighted the importance of Soviet sources whilst at the same time issuing an essential caveat:

Almost all of my information is derived from Soviet sources... Soviet publications - I am referring to those directed to the people of the USSR and not to external propaganda directed to foreign countries - constitute a very important source of comprehensive information... Other sources, such as the reports of occasional travellers and of refugees, are limited in scope and are usually biased. Soviet sources are also biased in the sense that they often conceal relevant facts,ⁱ but since their policy of concealment varies according to circumstances, it is possible by careful and cumulative study of Soviet publications over a period to construct something like a coherent picture of the real situation. Unlike travellers and refugees, the Soviet authorities do have access to the facts, and it seems to me that a source which has access to the facts is potentially more useful than one which has not.⁵

ⁱ The problem of ‘disinformation’ has also been mentioned by **Dallin** (1973) p.563.

Soviet sources, although essential to researching Central Asia, had their limitations. Waardenburg drew attention to the “relatively limited number of available facts.”⁶ Western scholars relied on a wide range of material such as scholarly publications, official pronouncements and the Soviet Press. Obviously, although a substantial body of Soviet source material came to the attention of the West, not all did. This could result in confused and often conflicting data, a situation compounded by the inevitable time-lag between the original Soviet research, its publication in the USSR, its export to the West and its translation and publication there. This is shown in the difficulty in establishing exactly when the Spiritual Directorates were established. It is not always clear that the dates proffered actually refer to the same entity, a confusion also evident with reference to Islamic publishing.

Although it could be argued that there was a large body of data available, Nove and Newth still felt “the facts are seldom unambiguous and are frequently contradictory,”⁷ or as Waardenburg somewhat harshly put it, “the facts that are known are often ambiguous and can hardly lead to any reliable coherent hypothesis and certainly not to a scholarly theory.”⁸

Even assuming that the available facts were reliable, and there was no way of verifying data, facts by themselves are inert. Motyl comments that “understanding actually precedes the collection of data and the ordering of facts.”⁹ Which of the available facts are concentrated on, and the significance given to them, is very much a function of the observer. Interpretation almost always goes hand in hand with collation. It is significant in this regard that one reviewer criticised Akiner’s *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union*, which attempted to re-set the terms of the debate by presenting facts free of value-judgements, for its stated aim of avoiding politics: “a dubious judgement... it would in this reviewer’s opinion, be more realistic if broader concessions to this inextricable ‘political’ element in the Soviet scene had been made.”¹⁰

The shortage of facts forced Western scholars to practise ‘reading between the lines’¹¹ of Soviet sources both to extract data and to provide interpretations of available

information. The precise nature of the reading and the conclusions drawn could be said to have been affected by the personality and experience of the scholars themselves.

ii) Observer

Conceptualisation not only proceeds observation but also imparts meaning to the things observed.¹²

The conceptualisation of an issue, the questions asked of it, reflects the experiences and usually unconscious preconceptions of the questioner. In other words, as a result of his or her personal interests and experiences a researcher often unwittingly sets the terms of debate and thereby determines its outcome. It is partly for this reason that studies of the USSR produced in India differ markedly from those emanating from the USA or Pakistan. Imart, who was a student in Algiers in the 1960s, directly compared the Central Asia of the 1970s to the Algeria he knew, while as late as 1983 Wheeler was still comparing Soviet Asia to British India.¹³

Lemercier-Quelquejay warned that Central Asian émigré sources were typically “resolutely anti-Soviet... and generally lack[ed] objectivity.”¹⁴ Meyer noted defectors and refugees were “deeply engaged in partisan politics and obviously had axes to grind.”¹⁵ Whilst a university-based scholar could legitimately claim a greater degree of objectivity, nobody is free of “predispositions in favour of certain conceptual schemes and resistance to others”¹⁶ which will be reflected in their work.

It must also be noted that research personnel are to an extent self-selecting - a person only becomes involved in research if he or she has a pre-existing interest in or involvement with the topic. The ‘re-skilling’ of former colonial officers as post-colonial researchers was referred to in the Introduction. Such figures inevitably, and quite naturally, drew on their own colonial experiences in interpreting the USSR.

Very rarely, a clear stance is taken by a writer. Kolarz stated: “Discrimination on religious grounds not only diminishes the rights enjoyed by the individual Soviet citizen but it is also prejudicial to the collective rights of national groups... I believe that it is an

essential part of this truth that religious believers form the new oppressed class of the Communist regime... Throughout the history of the Soviet Union religion has remained the most visible ideological alternative to Communism.”¹⁷

More often a personal standpoint must be inferred from the text and an understanding of the writer’s background. Bennigsen’s writing evinces a strong aversion to totalitarianism, an understanding of the dynamic of underground resistance movements, a patriotism which he seems to have imputed to others living under totalitarianism, a preference for folklore and folk memory over official statements and identification of language, culture and identity as a single whole. All this is consonant with his origins in an émigré family, his upbringing in France, his experiences in the Resistance, and his travels in the Muslim world of the 1950s collecting oral history, folklore and epic verse. Rywkin’s 1963 work concentrated on the political structure of Uzbekistan, where he had been exiled during the War, and the arbitrary nature of the Soviet policies of which he had been the victim.

The difference in approach deriving from the varied British, French and American experiences of colonialism and of Islam is clear from the preceding chapters. Dallin noted that many researchers in the field had prior experience in government or in institutions connected to government. “Such a record is apt to impart particular attitudes and perspectives.”¹⁸ Hostler’s interest in pan-Turkism and characterisation of Central Asia as a “soft underbelly” of the USSR (a term used in the Second World War by US planners of Italy in Europe) might be explained by reference to his time as Military Attaché to the US Embassy in Ankara, Turkey’s position as the only regional member of NATO and the ‘Northern Tier’ doctrine of containment, which was itself devised by Caroe. His book grew out of his MA at Georgetown University, which he attended as part of a United States Air Force graduate training scheme.

In fact, the majority of scholars in the field prior to the 1980s, when a new generation began to challenge earlier understandings, fell into one or both of two groups.

On the one hand there were former government employees, many of whom had been involved in colonial administration or had held posts relating to the Soviet Union. These included Hostler, Caroe, Conquest, and Wheeler. On the other were émigrés from Eastern Europe and the USSR or their descendants, such as Rywkin, Carrère d'Encausse, Kolarz and Rakowska-Harmstone. Bennigsen and Hayit fell into both camps as being both émigrés and former state employees, albeit for different states. Thus the object of study, the Soviet administration of Muslim regions and Muslims' reaction to this, results in part from the amalgam of scholars concentrating on the region.

Within each group certain trends are discernible. Former colonial administrators tend to stress the functioning of the state with an eye to the breakdown or preservation of the state structure, bearing in mind the experiences of other multi-ethnic polities. The second group often stressed the injustices perpetrated by the Communist regime, the intolerability of such a situation and the imperative of national liberation.

These distinctions are not absolute, since those involved in the study of Central Asia communicated with one another and exchanged ideas. French scholars in particular often worked together, to the extent that it is almost possible to discern a 'Parisian school.' Many of their works were translated by Wheeler, who was influenced by them and was a frequent speaker at the Royal Central Asian Society, where lectures were attended by influential members of the British Establishment.

Columbia University in the USA was another focus of Central Asian studies. Allworth and Rywkin received their PhDs from Columbia within a year of each other. Allworth returned shortly after Bennigsen left Columbia for Chicago, where Wimbush was one of the latter's students. Also at Columbia at this time was the geographer Lewis, who wrote on Central Asia's demography. Rywkin retained links with Allworth's Nationalities Seminar, also at Columbia.

The result of these circumstances was a tight-knit and mutually reinforcing academic community into which dissenting voices might find it hard to break. The degree of congruence in the views of the different scholars who both led and moulded

the debate can often seem remarkably high. New works were reviewed in the academic press by established scholars in the field, and these naturally tended to praise works which accorded with their own judgement. Richard Pierce for instance reviewed Wheeler's *The Peoples of Soviet Central Asia* and Rywkin's *Moscow's Muslim Challenge*, which was itself also reviewed by Wheeler and by Wimbush.

The person of the observer could of itself lend weight to an analysis. Hayit, as a former *apparachik*, carried authority when writing about Soviet policy. Wheeler's rank of Colonel was almost always mentioned in connexion with his name. Being a title, like Caroe's knighthood, this is standard etiquette, but it also serves to bolster the authoritativeness of "an author with unique competence in his field."¹⁹ In one review we learn that "Count Alexandre Bennigsen is a Russian."²⁰ Neither the title nor the description is strictly accurate, since Bennigsen's father held the title at the time of its abolition and the family were Baltic Germans. Although Bennigsen was neither a Russian nor a Count the styling lent an air of authority to his writings.

There is one final point to be made about the 'observers.' This is that almost all had backgrounds and interests in political science. Their work therefore reflected what was seen to be the primary political issue of the day, that of colonialism. The future of colonialism and its relation to Communism on the one hand and the Muslim world on the other provides the underlying theme of virtually all writing on Soviet Central Asia. As political scientists, the interpretations of scholars were based on political understandings. Economists were relatively rare, as were scholars with primary interests in literature or women's issues (*The Surrogate Proletariat* being a notable exception). Scholars with backgrounds in Islamic Studies were notable for their absence. Such issues were therefore presented through a political filter, reflecting the political temper both of the scholar and of the time.

If the personal can be described as political, then the very person of the researcher is a political fact affecting research findings. As Meyer has it, "since all social studies are conducted within a political context, they are likely to express the student's political attitude. Politics and methodology inevitably are intertwined."²¹

iii) Process

By 'process' Dallin seems to have meant methodology. This was not a primary concern of the scholars under review who favoured the 'thick description' technique of writing in which methodology is implicit in the text rather than being treated as a separate issue. Although the formal discussion of methodology and the precise meanings of terms and concepts enjoyed a vogue in the wake of Derrida's findings, this did not comprise a major part of the intellectual universe inhabited by the scholars reviewed, and the influence of such thought appears again to be waning. In place of the methodological 'How?' question, it may therefore be preferable to substitute 'Why?' in our examination of 'process.' In other words, what factors influenced the study of Central Asia such that one interpretation dominated all others.

Nove and Newth blamed traditional British fears of Russian designs on India for creating "some political attitudes which hardened into a tradition which is apt to look at these areas [Central Asia]... from this political-strategic angle."²²

The dominance of the political-strategic approach to Central Asia, which in part arose from the political backgrounds of the scholars involved and which continues to this day, is clear from the texts and informs even such ostensibly politically neutral works as Monteil's *Essai*.

Dallin wrote of "an empirically observable congruence between the political temper of the times and the general thrust of dominant interpretations by specialists on the USSR,"²³ and it is clear that the study of Soviet Islam was strongly influenced by the prevailing *zeitgeist*.

Although there was a pre-existent tradition for the study of Central Asia from a strategic standpoint, as demonstrated in the first chapter of this thesis, this does not in itself explain why this tradition should have been continued. Early French scholars appeared more concerned with the relevance of the Soviet model for the continuance of the French Empire, and even after that empire's demise works continued to appear which did not focus on geo-politics.

The political fact of the Cold War pushed geo-politics to the fore. The perceived Soviet threat to Western interests created “a permanent demand for data on and analysis of the Soviet Union”²⁴ particularly with regards the country’s likely political development. In this context, the colonial question, and whether or not the Soviet Union had solved it, was of paramount importance. In the light of the colonial experiences of Britain and France Central Asia had obvious strategic significance. Scholarship of the region reflected the strategic concerns of its time.

Unger²⁵ has made a useful distinction between works directly *commissioned* by government agencies and those *intended* for such agencies. None of the works cited here, with the possible exception of Hostler’s, was directly commissioned by the state, but there can be no doubt that many were intended to bear on policy or were read by policy-formulating government figures, and their authors consulted either formally or informally. This is particularly true of articles which appeared in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* and *Problems of Communism*. That what Motyl has referred to as “policy relevance” had a bearing on the choice of themes addressed is clear from the pre-ambles to many of the works. Monteil’s *Les Musulmans soviétiques* is prefaced with a personal encomium by Charles de Gaulle. One review explicitly recommended Conquest’s *The Last Empire* to “the statesmen, teachers and administrators of new and emerging nations.”²⁶ Following Stephen Cohen, Motyl writes,

policy oriented scholarship, which is designed for political consumption, can impose serious intellectual constraints. Complex political history must be rummaged for present-day relevance; ‘lessons’ and predictions become primary objectives...

These features can be discerned in the texts and often in reviews. One such describes the chapter on the Basmachis in *Moscow’s Muslim Challenge* as “interesting... for its bearing on today’s guerrilla warfare in Afghanistan.”²⁷ Another review of the same work stressed that “it may help to spread awareness of the region’s economic and strategic importance and give an idea of its future.”²⁸ According to Cohen the outcome of this was that research tended to become “politically palatable in findings.”²⁹

Although by no means all Western writing on the Soviet Union was hostile, it is a natural human characteristic to favour that which is congenial, and throughout the Cold War era it was politically congenial to view Central Asia as a potential source of crisis, holding out the possibility that the USSR would not only be unable to expand but itself risked collapse under the weight of its internal tensions. Explicitly criticising the works of Bennigsen, Carrère d'Encausse and Rywkin, Waardenburg wrote

Such books are primarily addressed to a western public in the context of the ideological warfare between the two super powers. They try to demonstrate that "the enemy" is threatened by enemies himself, and are meant to sustain certain hopes in the West... when, in a number of western studies of Islam in Central Asia, political considerations play a role, these studies risk becoming not only hypothetical but also expressions of wishfull (*sic*) thinking.³⁰

The charge of wishful thinking may seem unduly harsh when it is considered that the interpretative framework being used in analysing Central Asia, that of colonialism, suggested that an internal threat to multi-national states was inevitable, as described in Chapter 2. Further, the conclusions drawn from this colonial understanding stemmed from the authors' own experiences of empire.

Those works which were "politically palatable" and which subsequently became influential, being cited in footnotes and references, were those which stressed the colonial nature of Russian-Central Asian relations and "ideological aspects of Islam and its presumed conflict with atheism,"³¹ putting forward the view that Islam presented a threat to the Soviet Union due to the "ineluctable antagonism"³² between Marxist atheism and Islamic theism. This understanding, which focused on ideological abstracts, denied the possibility of any kind of *modus vivendi* and discounted the kind of pragmatism which is a feature of actual human interaction. Western scholars have been accused of over-simplification in their analysis, of reifying Islam into a 'thing' rather than a negotiated process.

There is a human tendency to seek simple explanations for complex issues since such explanations are easier both to comprehend and to work with. Simplification can however lead to misleading conclusions. A 1984 text mentions "the traditional Muslim

hostility to Christianity,”³³ which although congruent with popular opinion of the time denies Qur’anic doctrine and the complex historical experience of Christians in the Middle East, Moorish Spain and the Ottoman Empire.

Often Western texts appear similarly to be using the concept of Islam as a kind of intellectual short-hand. Islam could be used as a single unifying theory which explained a number of complicated and not always obviously related phenomena, from an unwillingness to migrate to high educational drop-out levels among girls, demographic trends or the political desire to create a Russian-based ‘pan-Soviet’ culture. All were part of a continuum which could be encapsulated in the single word ‘Islam.’ While such an approach necessarily denied the variety of experience within Soviet Islam and within Islam as a whole, it also discounted explanations which did not entail a religious dimension. Caution in this regard was liable to criticism. According to one review, while Akiner “recognises the political overtones of the religious-national situation in Soviet Islam,” yet “her very circumspect handling of both ‘Religion’ and Nationalism could mislead the uninitiated reader.”³⁴ The suggestion of a complexity requiring circumspection is ‘misleading.’

The position of Islam in the Soviet Union was seen as part of the “colonial question.” In a sense, none of the works examined in this thesis was primarily about Islam. Rather, they were about politics and the role that Islam or rather “Islamic identity” played in Soviet politics. Islam often appears less as a religion than as a signifier designating ‘the other’ which could be turned to political account. According to Waardenburg,

The authors concernedⁱⁱ say that they do not use [‘Islam’] to indicate a religious faith or religion but rather to indicate a group identity of “Muslim” ethnic non-Russians over against “non-Muslim” ethnic Russians... this reminds me of the dubious implications of the French custom, until the late fifties, of speaking of “*les musulmans de l’Afrique du Nord*” without really knowing much of Islam. This label served to distinguish North Africans from the French by stressing their religion... [They] oversimplify [Islam], approaching it according to certain pre-established schemes... [they] have no direct contact with the people concerned, who, as a living reality, are completely absent from such descriptions. As a consequence there is a propensity to develop complex speculative theories in

ⁱⁱ Waardenburg singles out Bennigsen, Carrère d’Encausse, Rywkin and Hans Bräker.

isolation from the material itself... Consequently such books use the facts to present ideological rather than scholarly views.³⁵

In fact a large body of work was produced detailing Islam precisely as a religion. Often however the sub-text of such studies was to determine whether the Islamic faith was capable of providing a socio-cultural content to a putative nationalist movement. Interest in Soviet Islam as a faith was motivated by political considerations. In the 1950s, when Islam world-wide was not seen as politically important, the religion was largely passed over. By the 1980s, with Islam seen in the West as a major threat to international stability, it assumed a primary importance in the titles of many works on Central Asia.

Because Soviet Islam was seen as being of primarily political significance, scholars of the region might be said to have been predisposed in favour of the prevailing mood of the 1970s and 1980s when Islam began to be seen as inherently political and inherently anti-Western. Once Soviet Islam had been characterised as essentially Sufi in nature such a position was almost unavoidable given the important historical role of Sufi groups in anti-colonial agitation in North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and, in the 1980s, Afghanistan. As one reviewer wrote, “those readers of the last issue of [*Religion in Communist Lands*] who remember the striking part played by the Sufi brotherhoods in the Afghan resistance (see article by Olivier Roy)ⁱⁱⁱ will be prepared for the vital part played by the brotherhoods in the life of Soviet Islam.”³⁶

It must also be remembered that the most serious threat to Atatürk’s Westernisation of Turkey came from a revolt organised by the Naqshbandis, which led to Sufism being proscribed in the Turkish Republic. If Muslim states themselves regarded Sufism as an anti-Western political movement, why should not Western scholars also? Scholars of Central Asia had already been moving cautiously towards a position which subsequently became unquestioned popular orthodoxy.

ⁱⁱⁱ *RCL* 12.1 (1984) pp.55-69

Motyl blamed the media, by which he seems to have meant the popular mass media and especially the Press, for the content of much writing on the USSR, complaining of.

The pervasiveness, influence and prominence of the media... their fascination with impressions and images, and their disdain for history, complexity and depth impress themselves on Sovietology, encouraging scholars to describe bits and pieces of events or processes, to seek out the unusual and exotic, and to avoid systematization, historical perspective and comparison. Sovietology is especially prone to succumb to the media's blandishments as a result of its politicization by and close relationship with the state: just as the modern media tend to set much of the political agenda for the state, so, too, a politicized Sovietology is forced to draw on the media for much of its own agenda.³⁷

Motyl over-states his case, although media concerns often reflect more general concerns and elected politicians need to be aware of these. Motyl's contention that scholars of the USSR only became concerned with non-Russians after their "discovery" by the media in 1986 is manifestly untrue. Nevertheless, in the treatment of 'political' Islam after 1979 a congruence can be seen between media and scholarly concerns. Although it is a moot point whether the popular press does directly influence the content of academic work, it undoubtedly both moulds and reflects the environment in which that work is received. In so doing it will have an effect on which analyses gain widespread attention, by predisposing readers to prefer one interpretation over another. Most people will tend to favour an understanding which accords with what they have already read or are familiar with over one which challenges this, and because of this the frequency and media of propagation of an idea can have a profound effect on its reception.

The reception and propagation of ideas forms the forth part of our 'genealogy.' In this the identity of the scholars involved and the political environment in which works were produced combined with such other factors as the anticipated readership and the distribution and circulation of books in promoting one understanding over others.

iv) Reception

The imperative for “political palatability” can be illustrated by reference to a review which appeared in *Problems of Communism* in 1967 and which discussed the re-issue of Caroe’s 1953 *Soviet Empire*, Bennigsen’s and Lemerrier-Quelquejey’s *l’Islam en URSS* and Nove’s and Newth’s *The Soviet Middle East*. Caroe’s work, described as “a classic,” was assigned thirteen column inches. Bennigsen’s and Lemerrier-Quelquejey’s “book of fundamental importance” received twenty-five column inches. Nove and Newth, who “seem to consider it more productive to evaluate the modernisation of the ‘Soviet Middle East’ while purposely avoiding preoccupation with the theme of Russian imperialism,” were given just four and a half column inches.³⁸

This indicates that there was a demand for and a willingness to engage with a certain type of writing on Central Asia - that which focused on Russian Imperialism - at the expense of competing interpretations. This is in part seen in the awarding of the prestigious Prix d’Aujourd’hui to d’Encausse’s *l’Empire éclaté*, the essential thesis of which was the threat *Homo Islamicus* posed to the Soviet Union. It is also made clear from available reviews which appeared shortly after the publication of monographs on the area. These favour political analysis over texts dealing with other aspects of Central Asia. This is in marked contrast to works dealing with other areas of the USSR, particularly Russia, where reviews of studies with overtly political overtones are in the minority. It was often the more partial books which were most warmly received as these tended both to chime with the political necessities of the time and to accord with the views of other scholars in the field.

Hayit’s *Turkestan im XX. Jahrhundert*, which displays a partiality concomitant with his émigré status, was adjudged by Pierce “more useful” than Caroe’s book and a “supplement” to Togan’s³⁹ and is the most commonly cited émigré work. Lemerrier-Quelquejey considered it a “well-documented [albeit] polemical work.”⁴⁰ The book’s status was enhanced by Carrère d’Encausse’s assessment that up until its appearance, “effectively nothing has been published in Western Europe on Russian Islam save

Professor von Mende's own work [1936], the *Essai sur l'Islam en URSS* of Vincent Monteil and a few isolated articles dealing with problems since the War."⁴¹

In the canon of literature on the Soviet Union, books about Central Asia were comparatively rare.^{iv} This meant that anyone wishing to read about the area had largely to rely on the work of a small number of dedicated scholars who were, in Motyl's words, "virtually above criticism," in that they represented the only knowledge-base on the region. The relatively small numbers of scholars in the field were less subject to the scrutiny accorded scholars of more popular fields. This situation was sometimes exacerbated by the scholars themselves, who naturally had an interest in promoting their understandings over competing interpretations.

As late as 1986 Wimbush claimed that "little systematic attention has been paid by scholars... to the Muslim regions and strategic periphery of the USSR,"⁴² staking a claim for his contribution to be regarded as something out of the ordinary and therefore of especial value, although six years earlier Bociurkiw had stated that "much has been written on Islam in the USSR."⁴³ Whilst Wimbush mentioned only his mentor and collaborator Bennigsen as a leading light in the field, Bociurkiw named eight additional scholars whose work might be consulted.^v A newcomer to the field who was not familiar with Bociurkiw's list is thus directed towards one particular understanding, that of Bennigsen and Wimbush. Bennigsen himself wrote of the "forgotten Islam"⁴⁴ of the USSR as if to deny the preceding body of work, including his own, although it must be admitted that Soviet Islam barely registered in the wider disciplines of either Soviet or Islamic studies.

One result of the relative paucity of scholars was that the same people were regularly consulted and asked to contribute to journals and collections of essays. Bennigsen, the pre-eminent authority, had 200 books, chapters and articles published under his name. In the period 1952-1985 he wrote 23 contributions to edited works in addition to monographs and papers published in journals. These included contributions

^{iv} 'Comparatively' because a vast body of literature was generated on the USSR from a number of standpoints, but this tended to focus on the Slavic 'heartlands'.

to the *Cambridge History of Islam* (1970), *Religion and Atheism in the USSR and Eastern Europe* (1975) and *Islam and Power* (1981).

The role of editors in propagating a viewpoint is an important one, since they can to an extent set the terms of the debate both by their power to accept or reject a piece offered for publication and by their power directly to commission work. Operating in a commercial world, publishers are constrained by the need to sell their product and inevitably have to consider the appeal a particular work may have for a putative audience. The editors of academic periodicals seldom work under the same kind of commercial pressure, but here too the need to preserve a journal's reputation as a serious scholarly publication may have an influence on what is regarded as acceptable material. The judgement of reviewers in such journals can also have a profound effect on the use to which a monograph is subsequently put.

In the case of publications covering general themes such as the three cited above which would not necessarily appeal exclusively to experts in any particular field or even to specialist students, contributions from recognised authorities are important in order to draw a potential reader to a work. By contributing, a recognised authority can act as a kind of mentor for a work as a whole in the way that an introductory essay by an established scholar can lend weight to a monograph.^{vi}

If mentorship in the scholarly environment helps in passing an idea from one academic to another, recommendation by an established expert can help a book pass ideas to a wider audience. Wheeler regarded Rywkin's *Moscow's Muslim Challenge*, as "among the most objective which have so far appeared."⁴⁵ Other reviewers described the work as "one of the best books of its kind in existence"⁴⁶ and as "a refreshingly up-to-date and stimulating study which fills a sorely felt gap."⁴⁷ Such comments went some way in ensuring the work's popularity, although Richard Pierce, who noted that the text was essentially an update of Rywkin's *Russian Central Asia*,

^v Wheeler, Caroe, Lemerrier-Quelquejay, Carrère d'Encausse, Zenkowsky, Kolarz, Allworth, Rakowska-Harmstone "and others."

^{vi} cf. Wheeler's introduction for an English-speaking audience of *Islam in the Soviet Union* (1967). Carrère d'Encausse's *Réforme et Révolution chez les Musulmans de l'Empire russe* (1966) carried a lengthy introductory essay by one of the leading French Islamists of the time, Maxime Rodinson.

was more guarded. Reviews were written by the same group of scholars who authored many of the most important texts. These naturally endorsed positions similar to their own.

The same assertions or viewpoints appearing in a number of places gain force by repetition. It is only when a large number of articles and chapters from different publications are collated and read together, as they almost never are, that the degree of this repetition becomes apparent.

In many cases this is not simply a matter of a scholar returning to a favourite subject or expanding on a theme but of the exact replication of words which had appeared earlier. This tendency is evident in Wheeler's works of the 1960s, sections of *The Peoples of Soviet Central Asia* repeating verbatim passages of *Racial Problems in Soviet Muslim Asia*, and later in the works of both Bennigsen and Wimbush. In the *Journal of the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Wimbush wrote

"Parallel Islam" is essentially underground Islam; because Islam - at least in its Sunnite variant - does not require an institutionalised clerical structure, such as one finds in Catholicism or Orthodoxy; for example, almost anyone with enough energy can conduct the prescribed Islamic rituals.⁴⁸

The following year he wrote:

Parallel Islam is, essentially, underground Islam. Because Islam - at least in its Sunni variant - requires no institutionalized (*sic*) clerical structure to direct religious practise, such as is required in Catholicism and Orthodoxy, almost anyone with some knowledge of Islamic tradition can conduct the prescribed rituals.⁴⁹

Other instances of such repetition could be cited.^{vii}

Repetition might be expected for two reasons. Firstly, the relatively small number of scholars produced an enormous body of writing. Several articles on the same topic might appear in different places in a single year. It would be unreasonable to expect a scholar who in many cases has devoted a lifetime's research to developing a

^{vii} Compare e.g. Bennigsen & Lemercier-Quelquejay (1978) p.155 with Bennigsen & Wimbush (1985b) p.21

thesis to return to the drawing-board and produce something entirely new. If a position bears stating, it bears repeating. Circumstances seldom change so quickly as to demand a radical re-appraisal of a previously held position. There is also the established practise of 'testing the water' for a thesis by publishing a paper based on a work in progress. The findings of the paper will then reappear in the finished work, by which time they will have gained the strength of familiarity.

Secondly, the projected audience has to be taken into account. A scholar may produce two essentially similar articles which are read by discreet audiences. A subscriber to *Religion in Communist Lands*, which has historically focused on issues concerning Christianity and appears to be primarily aimed at those with interests in Human Rights and Mission, would not necessarily read *Central Asian Survey*, where a similar article by the same scholar might also appear. Thus the same information may pass to two separate but not isolated communities and an idea can come into general circulation and find general acceptance.

Aside from the editorial policy of academic journals, potential target audiences for scholarly writing can be discerned from the pricing of monographs. Although original publication prices can be hard to ascertain and their meaning hard to evaluate in real terms, Britain's Net Book Agreement which required publishers to print the price on the cover of books provides some vital clues, as do reviews.

Academic publications are often relatively expensive, but many of the more influential works on Central Asia were priced at a cost roughly equivalent to that of a novel. *The Peoples of Soviet Central Asia* cost 12/6, and was as Pierce pointed out "designed for a hypothetical 'general reader'."⁵⁰ Caroe's *Soviet Empire* cost 18/-, marginally more than hardback fiction. By contrast, Nove's and Newth's *The Soviet Middle East* was priced at 30/-, indicating a more restricted anticipated audience. Conquest's *The Last Empire* was priced at 3/6 in paperback, exactly the same as the Penguin Classics edition of the same year of Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. Although in 1967 *Islam in the Soviet Union* was expensive at 50/-, its authors were still comparatively unknown in the English-speaking world and needed the *imprimatur* of

Wheeler's introduction. *The Islamic Threat to the Soviet State* retailed at a relatively much cheaper £12.95 in 1983, when Bennigsen was the best-known writer in the field.

Perhaps most interesting in terms of the effect of pricing policy on circulation, and therefore on whose voice is heard is the contrast between Akiner's *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union* (1983) and Bennigsen's and Wimbush's almost identical *Muslims of the Soviet Empire* of two years later. The former cost £25 and the latter £18.50. If as one reviewer contended *Muslims of the Soviet Empire* was "a must for anyone interested in the world of Islam,"⁵¹ Akiner's must be regarded as aimed at a more specialist audience who might be prepared to spend the extra, and indeed the "uninitiated" were warned off in one review.

In his review of *Moscow's Muslim Challenge*, Wimbush recommended it as "a splendid introductory text to the subject for both students and laymen" and "a superior effort which will find a ready audience among scholars, students, policy makers and laymen."⁵² The audience among scholars was assured in part because the work dovetailed neatly with what had already been written (*Islam in the Soviet Union* was explicitly mentioned in the review). For policy-makers it was important since "events and trends in Soviet Central Asia are of significantly more than anthropological interest... [they] have implications not only for the short- and long-term stability of the USSR... but also for the stability and evolution of the entire Central Asian - and by extension Middle East - region."⁵³ For students and laymen the attraction seems to have lain in Rywkin's style. He was not "verbose or pedantic" but "lucid, avoiding for the most part the hideous language of today's social scientists."

Books dealing with Soviet Central Asia have been for the most part highly readable, written with a fluidity which draws the reader along with their argument. This in part results from the 'thick description' style of writing, and has the undoubted advantage of making such books accessible to a wide audience. An argument persuasively put and which chimes with a reader's expectations obviously carries weight. The disadvantage of such writing is that it may discourage critical scrutiny, since the argument is put so forcefully as to appear self-evident. Both writer and reader may be carried along by rhetoric.

It is rarely that the work of one scholar, even when directly quoted, is critically analysed for its sources, its use of terminology such as ‘colony,’^{viii} or for the structure of its argument. Slight changes, or conclusions not adequately supported by the evidence, could encroach unchallenged and these could alter the nature of the argument. One of the most interesting of these changes is the way in which the Slavic name-suffix -ev/-ov is bracketed or even excised from Central Asian personal names. Some (e.g. Wheeler and Allworth), occasionally replaced it with the Turkic -oghli/-uli, which as a patronymic suffix is not strictly speaking cognate with the familial -ev/-ov (since the introduction of surnames in Turkey, the suffix -oğlu has been used in a familial sense, and the Slavic -ov was originally a patronymic). The result was to suggest the Central Asians had been less influenced by Russian culture than was perhaps the case.

This lack of appraisal seems to show that the general thrust of arguments about Central Asia were so readily received and assimilated into the mainstream as virtually to preclude examination. In a sense, at the time these studies were being produced their conclusions were regarded as self-evident and not requiring detailed critical appraisal. In other words their arguments chimed perfectly with both their times and their audience.

v) Closing Remarks

Our “genealogy of ideas” thus contains a number of elements - the “genetic code” - which influence research outcomes and which explain why the Western study of Central Asian Islam developed in the way it did, and towards the conclusions it expressed. These include the difficulty of obtaining accurate information, the backgrounds of and relationships between scholars of the region, the political and

^{viii} This is particularly evident in the use of Islamic terms, especially where their Central Asian usage varies slightly from the ‘norm,’ which were often used as if unproblematic in a way which supported a particular pre-conception. The use of the terms Dar ul-Islam and Dar ul-Harb to describe relations between Russians and Central Asians is typical.

intellectual environment in which they worked, and the way their work was propagated and received.

Of these the most important must be the political and intellectual environment, since this directly affected scholarly reactions to available evidence and the way in which those reactions were received by others. I have argued throughout that environmental factors have had a profound effect in shaping discourse on Central Asia. The greatest of these has been the experience of, and reaction to, the colonial period in European history.

Without wishing to propound a deterministic theory of scholarship, that a colonialist rubric should have been adopted in interpreting Central Asian Islam might be seen to have been almost inevitable. Colonialist theory most readily matched the experiences of the scholars undertaking research, it seemed to be confirmed by political developments world-wide, and perhaps most importantly it best answered the political needs of a time in which it was almost literally unthinkable that life under Soviet tutelage should be less onerous than under British or French.

Dallin remarked:

there is little we can do about the errors of analysis which are due to the nature of the Soviet system and the inherent limitations of the state of the art. Other blunders, however, have been due primarily to ourselves and to the biases which we unwittingly absorb from our political environment. If this is so, then a greater awareness of such shortcomings and a greater openness to alternative interpretations should be the first conditions for avoiding such failures in the future.⁵⁴

Openness to alternative interpretations is far easier to call for than to achieve. If we accept the contention put forward by George Orwell in *1984* that a concept which cannot be expressed cannot be thought, we must ask whether it was in fact possible to express divergent views. This is not to suggest that the language to express such views was lacking, but rather that the environment in which they might be put forward was liable to result in their authors being branded “Communist sympathisers” like Egretaud, or to lead to the accusation that they had, like Akiner or Nove and Newth, missed the

point. In either case, divergent conclusions were liable to be ignored by their peers as irrelevant.

In the modern age of electronic databases and communication via the Internet, a wider range of competing interpretations can be accessed, and more quickly, than ever before. This however is a new development which is only now beginning to replace personal contact and personal recommendation, and to circumvent the natural risk-aversion of publishers, as a means of disseminating ideas. It remains the case that the best way of becoming known as an expert in the field is through traditional channels, in which the constraints described above continue to apply. For an idea to gain acceptance, it still has to conform with the prevailing mood.

Waardenburg accused scholars themselves of wishful thinking, but more important than this must be wishful thinking on the part of an audience in the West now made up largely of aid agencies and petrochemicals companies which might show themselves willing only to accommodate certain understandings which further their own interests, just as the acceptable analyses of the past could be used to further the political interests of certain groups. Political palatability remains a strong criterion in determining which interpretations of Central Asian political and social dynamics gain an ascendancy. In a sense Western scholars may be working within an ideological straitjacket every bit as real if less obvious as that of their erstwhile Soviet counterparts. Although a relatively recent coinage, it can be seen that 'political correctness' has always had an influence in the interpretation of data.

A recent example of the functioning of such 'political correctness' can be seen in the West's reaction to the Wars of Yugoslav Succession. Early on, these were ascribed to "ancient ethnic hatreds." This was more politically convenient to the West than suggestions that the causes of the wars were rational, mostly connected with questions of local political and economic power and therefore, given the political will, stoppable. That the only evidence for such "ancient" hatreds directed at anyone save the departed Ottomans had occurred in exceptional circumstances (those of the Wartime puppet Croatian Ustashe state) was irrelevant once the orthodoxy of the irrational Balkans which itself has a history dating from the nineteenth century was re-asserted.

With the benefit of hindsight ten years after the collapse of the USSR, it might be tempting to dismiss the books under review as being no more than the products of their time. To do so would be a mistake. Where earlier scholars were in error in their judgements or interpretations, they were so for very cogent reasons. It is important to understand the factors which moulded these earlier works in part because they form the bed-rock from which any further scholarship in the field must proceed, and in part because future scholarship is itself likely to be affected by very similar factors.

To deny that any objectivity is possible and to suggest that discourses are no more than products of their age and create a 'functional truth' serving certain interests is to fall into the trap of relativism. The relativist assertion that "there is no 'beyond the text'", that all discourse is merely a "construct or image" which describes a subjective state rather than an observable and comprehensible reality would seem to suggest that academic enquiry is pointless and academic discourse essentially fatuous. However, unless we are aware of the limits of objectivity and the underlying causes of those limits, then objectivity, and with it meaningful debate, is itself under threat.

Beyond the theoretical, an understanding of the nature of these texts and what informed them has a very practical aspect. They are not merely historical documents. They continue to inform much of what is understood and written about Central Asia in the West. Furthermore, as the new states of the region integrate into a Western-dominated world economy and seek investment along with both political and economic credits from the West, Central Asians are themselves increasingly interpreting their Soviet past through this Western colonial discourse. In the short-term, this 'meeting of Western expectations' in describing their societies has its advantages, but such a development cannot but have a profound impact on the long-term political and economic future of the region.

Although this thesis has concentrated specifically on Central Asia it is my belief that many of the factors which, I have argued, have prejudiced the understanding of the region's political and social dynamic may also be at play in other fields of the social sciences and perhaps even in some branches of the natural sciences.

A willingness to recognise the constraints imposed upon scholarship by factors external to the research itself, particularly that of political palatability which is often the least evident, is essential. If academic writings are to make any claim to being able to represent the 'truth,' it may occasionally be necessary to take stock and re-assess earlier contributions. Theories and analyses need constantly to be questioned, since inaccuracy is often unwitting and always hard for its perpetrator to recognise in himself. Truth in the Social Sciences which claim to have a direct application to the 'outside' world, especially those which purport to describe other societies, predict how they will behave and what our relationship with them should be, has a more than purely epistemological significance.

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- ¹ **Waardenburg** (1987) p.51
 - ² **Dallin** (1973) p.563
 - ³ *JRCAS* 54,III (1967) p.285
 - ⁴ "Introduction", *CAR* 1,I No page number.
 - ⁵ **Wheeler** (1954) p.179
 - ⁶ **Waardenburg** *op.cit.* p.50
 - ⁷ **Nove & Newth** (1967) p.10
 - ⁸ **Waardenburg** *op.cit.* pp.50/51
 - ⁹ **Motyl** (1990) p.10
 - ¹⁰ *AA* 14,III (1983) p.314
 - ¹¹ **Bennigsen** (1977) p.239
 - ¹² *ibid.* p.11
 - ¹³ *AA* 14,I (1983) p.69
 - ¹⁴ **Lemercier-Quelquejay** (1960) p.375
 - ¹⁵ **Meyer** (1991). p.131
 - ¹⁶ **Dallin** *op.cit.* p.565
 - ¹⁷ **Kolarz** (1961) pp.481, v, 1
 - ¹⁸ **Dallin** *op.cit.* p.565
 - ¹⁹ **Pierce** in *JRCAS* 53,III (1966) p.326
 - ²⁰ *JRCAS* 54,III (1967) p.285
 - ²¹ **Meyer** *op.cit.* p.136
 - ²² **Nove & Newth** *op.cit.* p.11
 - ²³ *ibid.* p.565
 - ²⁴ **Motyl** *op.cit.* p.6
 - ²⁵ **Unger** (1999) p.23
 - ²⁶ *JRCAS* 5,I (1963) p. p.64
 - ²⁷ *JIMMA* 3,II (1981) p.280
 - ²⁸ *CSP* 26,I (1984) p.98
 - ²⁹ both **Motyl** *op.cit.* p.7
 - ³⁰ **Waardenburg** *op.cit.* pp.62, 53
 - ³¹ **Chylinsky** *op.cit.* p.12
 - ³² *AA* 14,III (1983) p.314
 - ³³ *RC'L* 12,II (1984) p.231
 - ³⁴ *AA* 14,III (1983) p.314
 - ³⁵ **Waardenburg** *op.cit.* pp.51, 52
 - ³⁶ *RC'L* 12,II (1984) p.230

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- ³⁷ **Motyl** *op.cit.* p.8
³⁸ **Carlisle** (1967) pp.132-134
³⁹ **Pierce** (1957) p.45
⁴⁰ **Lemercier-Quelquejay** *op.cit.* p.370
⁴¹ **d'Encausse** (1957) p.63
⁴² **Wimbush** (1986) p.218
⁴³ **Bociurkiw** ((1980) p.9
⁴⁴ **Bennigsen** (1981) p.95
⁴⁵ *AA* 14,I (1983) p.68
⁴⁶ *R CL* 12,I (1984) p.107
⁴⁷ *JMMA* 3,II (1981) p.280
⁴⁸ **Wimbush** (1985) p.159
⁴⁹ **Wimbush** (1986) p.127
⁵⁰ **Pierce** (1966) p.326
⁵¹ *CSP* 24,II & III (1987) p.314
⁵² *RCL*12,I (1984) p.108
⁵³ *ibid.* p.107
⁵⁴ **Dallin** *op.cit.* p.576

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